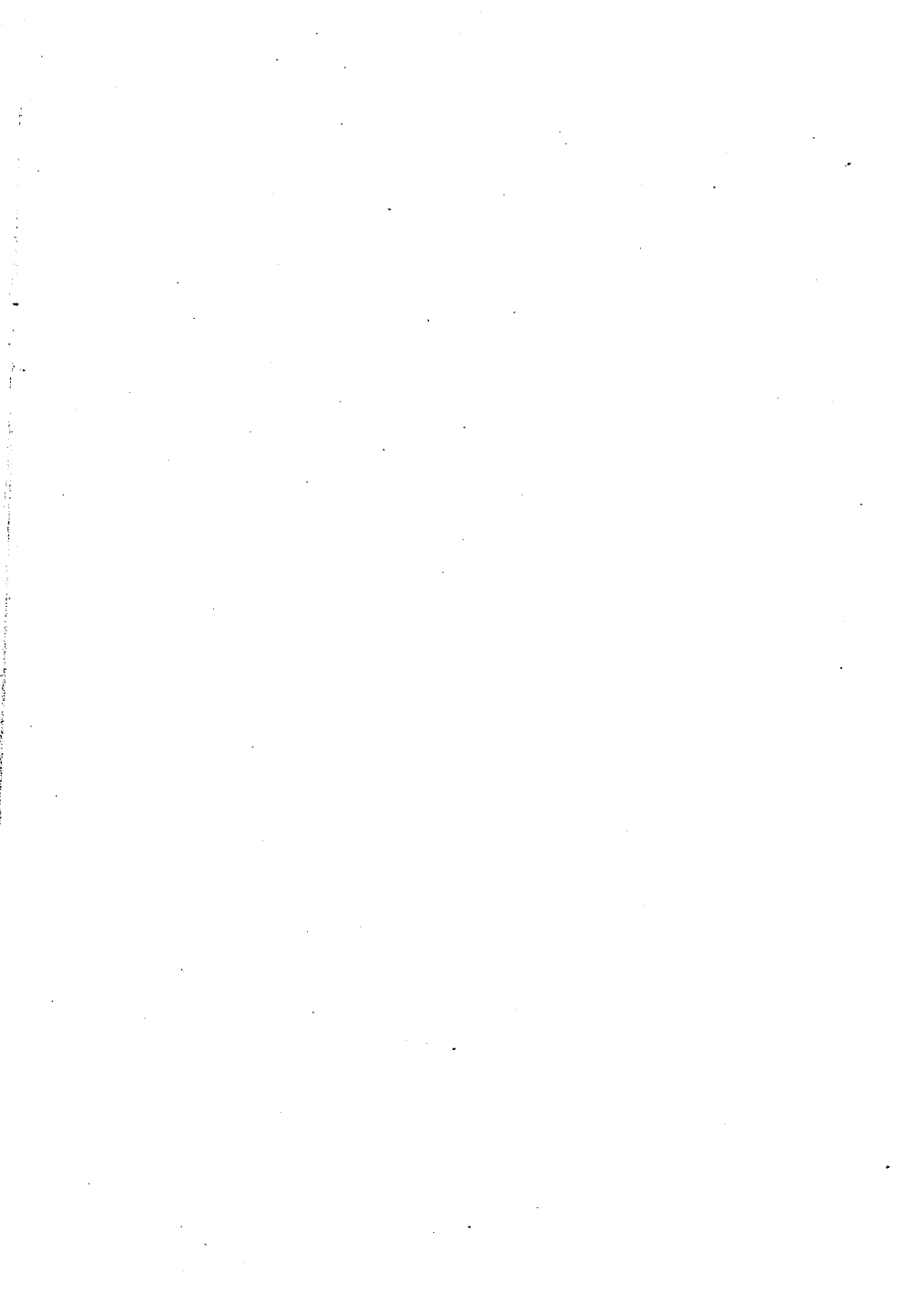


The University of Chicago
Libraries





PAUL: THE CHRISTIAN

JONATHAN CAPE AND HARRISON SMITH,
INCORPORATED, 139 EAST 46TH STREET, NEW
YORK, N. Y. AND 91 WELLINGTON STREET,
WEST, TORONTO, CANADA; JONATHAN CAPE,
LTD., 30 BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON, W. C. 1,
ENGLAND

PAUL: THE CHRISTIAN

BY THE AUTHOR OF
By An Unknown Disciple
Paul: The Jew



NEW YORK
JONATHAN CAPE & HARRISON SMITH

BS2502
Z6P27

COPYRIGHT, 1931, BY JONATHAN CAPE AND
HARRISON SMITH, INC.
FIRST PUBLISHED IN AMERICA, 1931



SET UP AND ELECTROTYPED IN THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA BY THE BENNETT TYPESETTING CORPORATION,
PRINTED BY THE VAIL-BALLOU PRESS, BOUND BY THE
J. F. TAPLEY COMPANY

Done ✓

"... in every case their self-love is the cause of their mistake."—*Clement of Alexandria*.

"... man . . . that will not see
Because he doth not feel."—*Shakespeare*.

"Simplement, entre le Christ et Saint Paul, je choisis le Christ."—*André Gide*. The pastor, in "Le Symphonie Pastorale."

SOMBRE and brooding, his turban veils pulled across his face, Paul rode up the narrow street and through the Damascus Gate of Jerusalem. His one desire was to get out of the city . . . to leave Judea itself behind him . . . to reach the desert . . . anywhere far from the horror of Stephen's death. Beyond the walls he did not halt, as his custom was, to turn in his saddle for a last look at the magnificence of the Temple. He rode straight on. He had not slept. All night long, hour after sleepless hour, the songs of the Levites had rung in his ears. Good and pleasant to live in unity the great choir of sanctified Jews had sung while outside the walls other Jews murdered Stephen. But who wanted to live in unity? Men had always killed each other. Only a few hours before, he, too, had wanted to silence Stephen. There was neither love nor peace in the world.

The keen remorse that caught Paul's breath was like a physical pain, and when he passed the scene of the stoning he dared not look round. Minute pictures of the

murder seemed stamped on his eyeballs. Stephen was still there, pushed along by the weight of the frantic men behind him. The excited, half-naked bathers rushed from beneath the white pillars of the bath-house portico to watch. One moment Paul saw the terrible blood-lust in the eyes of the maddened mob, and the next Stephen's beautiful spread-eagled body was again falling, falling into the abyss. The pictures came and went without any control from his will. The movements of the muscles in the thick neck of the brutal witness who had rolled the big boulder to the edge of the precipice . . . best make sure he had said . . . suddenly gave place to the light on Stephen's face. . . . Stephen had walked to death with a smile . . . that vanished, and there, inside Paul's brain, was the earnest gaze of the small boy under his crooked turban as he told of his search for the secret room where Solomon had tortured devils. Should he never ride away from the murder? But was it murder? Paul had been too distracted by misery to question Gamaliel about the examination of Stephen before the Sanhedrin. Though the old man's displeasure had melted a little when, in taking leave, Paul had kissed his hand and asked for his blessing, there had still been that hint of reproach in his manner, and he had offered no information as to how Stephen had come by his death. . . . Stephen had not protested. How could it be murder, when the Holy Law itself commanded that blasphemers were to be stoned? If the Great Council had condemned Stephen, its members had thought they were carrying out God's will . . . even Gamaliel? No! Gamaliel hated

violence. He would never approve of persecution.

But it was most unlikely that the Council had condemned Stephen. Indeed, a formal sentence was out of the question. Pilate had to be reckoned with. Probably the violent members of the Sanhedrin had hinted their desire for the death of Stephen to the leaders of the mob. Stephen safely dead, it would be easy to explain to Pilate that in his absence, with so large a body of troops, the Jews had got out of control. What could Pilate say? The Emperor held him responsible for the good government of the Province, and he had gone to Samaria on a murderous wild-goose chase, leaving Jerusalem to take care of itself. Caiaphas would arrange that the blame fell on the Romans. Paul could almost see the hawk-like face of the High Priest, as, with cunning politeness and that hard certainty of his, he explained the affair to the worried Procurator. The murder would be hushed up. But what did such questions of policy matter? The fate of the souls of men . . . the fate of his own soul . . . were the only things that counted now.

As the distance between Paul and Jerusalem lengthened and that to Damascus shortened, the pictures on his eyeballs faded and the songs of the Levites died away. But by that time his fighting mind had taken up the battle. It seemed to Paul that some power outside himself was forcing him to retrace step by step the bitter thoughts of the past two years. Riding doggedly on in the dust, with the sun hot on his head, it debated with him over and over again the new problems which had wrecked his life. . . . No man Jew or Gentile could be sure of salvation, and

yet men's bodies were carrying them slowly but inevitably to everlasting death. What hope was there? Every creed cried, "Sacrifice!" but what sacrifice could be great enough to save men from sin?

Paul's fight with that outside power grew more bitter . . . his thoughts blacker and more arid as he rode. Had Moloch, powerful, hideous and cruel, taken control of the world? No! no! Jehovah was omnipotent and kind. But was He kind? Men were cruel and hard but had not He made them? If the longing for salvation was hopeless, then the Creator was more cruel than His creatures! That was a terrible and blasphemous thought . . . Paul's mind recoiled . . . but at once went forward again. For what else could an honest man think, if God, the Father of his people, and omnipotent, could leave men to the eternal death that Adam's folly had bought for them? There was neither love nor peace in the world.

What had Gideon said? Ask of desire? Desire meant love, and love meant faith. . . . Love and faith were spiritual flames that could only be lit by a personal touch . . . a fire that came from God and must be passed by man from hand to hand. Gideon . . . no . . . it was Barnabas who had said that God had sent Jesus . . . one very near and dear to Him . . . to show men a higher way of living. But Jesus had been abandoned to despair. If God had sent him to pass on the flame, He had allowed it to be extinguished very quickly! Nothing happened without God's permission. So He had known that Jesus His messenger, would die cursed for ever by

hanging on a tree. It was God Himself who had put that curse on mankind. . . . Stephen had spoken kindly to his murderers . . . Jesus, too, had died without a curse on his lips. . . . If God loved? . . . There must have been something great about Jesus when men were so strangely impressed by him. . . . Gideon . . . Fortunatus . . . Barnabas . . . and Paul too. . . . Yes, it was true that in some strange way Jesus held his imagination. He could not forget him and yet he had never seen him. Gideon had spoken of a queer idea that Jesus had had . . . what was it? . . . Of being a sacrifice . . . a willing sacrifice . . . offered freely for the sins of mankind. The scapegoat each year was driven into the wilderness with the sins of the people on his head. God had ordained that. Paul's mind, wrestling backwards and forwards with that unseen antagonist suddenly stood still and then leapt far beyond his foe to a new idea. Suppose it were true? Men, weak and afraid, sacrificed out of terror and cowardice. But if God sacrificed, it would be out of a divine generosity and a passion of love for His creatures. If God did love, the crucifixion might well have a meaning. For God's sacrifice of Jesus . . . one very near and dear to Him . . . a great and spotless Spirit . . . would be a divine sacrifice perfectly offered. A perfect sacrifice, perfectly offered, would perfectly fulfil the Law. And to fulfil the Law perfectly would end it.

With that Paul's conflict was over. For one blinding instant he saw the whole purpose of God flung out before him, as a man might see the design on a banner

caught and blown taut in a gale. One moment the design, blurred, is lost in the folds of the flag, and the next, spread wide on the storm, its magnificent pattern can be clearly seen. Paul's hidden resistance broke and collapsed, and like a house whose beams have been eaten through by ants, his mind and soul fell into a heap.

So, when he reached Damascus it was only to leave it again. He felt he dare not linger. He must free himself from the ties of a life too familiar and from the danger of meeting Jews whom he knew. It did not matter where he went. He would join the first caravan leaving the city. He would go to Arabia, not, as he had intended when he had left Tarsus, to preach Judaism but to learn the meaning of what had happened to him. Had he seen Jesus? Had a voice spoken to him out of the blaze of light? Paul was not sure. One thing only was certain. He had been fighting against God. The battle had been profound and vast, but it was over now. God had conquered. He had sent Jesus. He was calling Paul. For what purpose? Paul did not know. But though ignorant he was no longer groping. God was leading him again. God was still in touch with His world. He was demanding something of him. All through his body Paul felt a new life throb, and every power in him rose to respond. His energy, which, like a great river lost in the sand, had been wastefully devastating his soul, now, dammed up, was ready to rush straight and swift into a new channel. . . . But what channel? God was going to tell him, and to hear His voice a man must be alone.

Paul did not expect to find solitude at once. He knew there was no quiet on the great trading routes where the noise and traffic moved with you. But if he went due south, in a few halts from the great Gate of Damascus he would be in the desert. Petra itself was only two hundred miles off. At Petra, if he went so far, he could either turn off east to the Indies or continue south to Egypt. Perhaps somewhere in the empty wilderness he might find a small village where he could live in peace, cared for by simple people who would leave him alone to think.

He went about the business of finding when the next caravan left Damascus and arranging for his journey into the desert with his usual promptitude. He bargained with camel-men, and hired camels and bought food as if nothing had happened. But the bustle of the marketplace was like a noise heard from far off. The intensity of his emotion made a loneliness around him. Other men, he saw, still imagined that the affairs of this life had the importance which he, too, had once attached to them. These merchants of Damascus, coming and going, buying and selling, thought that the goods they handled, the events in which they took part, were solid and permanent. But at any moment their certainties might be swept away, as his had been. Spiritual things were not real until the fire came. But when your mind and soul burst into flame . . . when the other world broke in dominant and insistent, the values of this world changed, and you knew it was only a passing show.

The caravans that left Damascus for Arabia always gathered together outside the Great South Gate. When

the day came on which Paul was to start, he was early at the camping-ground with his camels and camel-boy. All round, men were hastily cording up bundles and checking goods. Sweating slaves and porters hurried through the Gate and pushed into the crowd, jostling everybody in their haste to reach the waiting camels that crouched under empty pack-saddles at the other side of the throng. There was always this confusion and excitement before the start of a caravan. Paul's mind, full of the blazing colour of his vision, was reluctant to come back to the drab daily life of men working for their living. As he watched the crowd, his vision faded. Some of the bales, he knew, smelt of dusty woven carpets. From others the hot greasy smell of raw wool would ooze. The wrappings of a few might still give out the scent of the balsam they had held on their last journey to Damascus. If he wished, Paul could recall each smell. But he did not wish. Nor did he want to enter into personal relationship with his fellow-travellers. That would come later. The merchants and their slaves were of every race, and came from every Province in Roman Asia . . . indeed, from every country in the world. Straight-featured men from Rome and narrow-faced Egyptians, thin dark men from the Indies and fat citizens of Damascus with broad white faces, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and negroes jostled and fussed and sweated and shouted orders to one another across the crowd. Paul knew he must spend his life in teaching just such people . . . but not yet, not yet.

The usual mob of curious spectators gathered to watch the start. A young man, with a torn shirt half off one

brown shoulder, lounged through the Gate and leant against the column to eat a piece of black bread. A half-starved pariah dog sat at his feet and watched mournfully, hoping against hope for a share. A veiled woman with a basket on her head walked up and down. Above the rim of her black veil her brilliant dark eyes searched the crowd. She must have lost someone. It looked as if the caravan would never get under way. And then, suddenly, the huddle of camels and mules and horses began to straighten out. The last man mounted. The last slave fell into place beside his beast, and the long, tangled string of the caravan unwound and started on the first stage of its march through the desert.

It was early spring. There had been rain. The air smelt of wet, and the ground was muddy. The orchard trees were budding. The almonds were in flower. Hermon, rising directly in front, was covered in snow, but the long slope of his vast shoulders had a background of blue sky. As they passed out of the oasis, Paul, high up on his camel, could see far across the waste land to where the tracks beaten out by endless traffic ran out of sight. The camels slipped and slid on the sticky ground. Their feet could get no grip on the glair.

"They ought to have claws at the end of their pads like a cat's," Paul's driver said, as he pulled at the head-ropes. "But we'll soon come to gravel, and fortunately the fords as far as Petra are paved. The beasts can cross in safety," he added, smiling at Paul.

Paul smiled back. The man was an Arab, young and thin. His clothes hung in rags on his lithe body. He wore

a Phrygian cap, his hair was long, and his teeth were white and clean. He was alert and alive in every inch. As Paul looked at him, quite unexpectedly his aloofness vanished. A great and sudden relief flowed through him. He was free! He need no longer obey rules that make friendship impossible except between Jews. There was no obligation laid upon him now to judge and condemn other men. The barriers were down. The debt had been paid, and every man had the same chance of salvation. This Arab could also be saved.

The driver went on talking, but Paul did not hear. The long string of buff-coloured camels, the mules in their gay trappings, the shuffling of feet, and the cries of the drivers, had faded away. Once more nothing was real but the love of God.

The Arab, seeing Paul's exaltation, stopped talking and fell back out of sight. Now and then Paul caught a glimpse of bare legs and naked brown feet with sinewy toes close to the flank of his camel, and sometimes a dark hand holding the nose-rope stretched out to give the beast's nostrils a twitch, but the man did not speak. If Paul asked a question, he ran forward to answer, and if Paul was silent, the Arab effaced himself and left him to his ecstasy. And Paul, absorbed in thought, rode on in silence. He was in the grip of an experience too big to understand. What had happened to him that night by the sea and again on the moor on the way to Jerusalem, he now saw, had not been attempts at possession. No! It had been God trying to pierce through the arrogance and stupidity of the outer mind and make His voice heard.

It was God who filled his soul with this passion that shook his mind free. Spiritual passion lit fire by which you thought. It brought new life and new vision and new strength to endure. It gave you thoughts that came and went so rapidly, and formed into intellectual designs so brilliant, that they dazzled you. What man could understand the ways of the invisible? Something seemed to draw Paul far below the depths of himself to where, in the presence of a Being remote and wrapped in mystery, there was comfort and hope. This was the real world, where, at the centre of life time stood still. The unbearable hurt of being forgotten and excluded was over. God never forgot. Remorse for the death of Stephen was over, too. God would forgive. The fear of death had gone. Of what account was death, When Jesus lived? Stephen lived, too. The resurrection was a fact. All the terrors that beset man . . . death, old age, loneliness and pain . . . were nothing. Neither death nor old age existed.

Paul saw that he had swung round to convictions once hateful to him, but when he tried by an effort of the imagination to re-create his feelings about Judaism, they were strange to him. His old creed had dropped away. The vision had wiped out his past convictions as a deluge of rain wipes out the tracks across the desert. He felt neither hatred nor contempt for this lost faith. The transition seemed as natural as the daily changes in the countryside. At first, when they rose from their tents, pitched on the dreary plain south of Damascus, they seemed to have made no progress. Damascus, green and beautiful,

was still there in its oasis of trees, set in the yellow sand of the desert, with the snow-topped mountains behind it. The white slopes of Hermon still rose directly before them against the background of blue sky. But each hour Hermon shifted a little, and soon he was no longer in front, but blocked the northern horizon, and Damascus had disappeared. In such a way God had led His people from Egypt, and in just the same way He was now leading them out of Judaism into a new truth.

It was a leisurely journey at the pace set by the slowest camel, never more than three miles an hour. Paul, jogging along over the flinty ground, was content to dream his way into new knowledge. The country itself fitted into his mood. One place after another recalled God's dealings with the Jews. Paul knew the story by heart. It was part of the history of his race. He had lilted it over and over again in class when he was a boy. The heaps of stones that marked where there had once been dwellings were, the camel-drivers said, cities of idolators destroyed by God. The tall, upright monoliths that stood here and there in lines or rings were the idolators themselves. Lot's wife was one of these, and not, as Paul had thought when he was a boy, a pillar of rock-salt licked by the cattle. Step by step they crossed the empty waste of gravel. Where there was water the land was planted with olives and vines. Where there was none it was desert. Sometimes they passed flat terraces along a hillside covered with trees and shrubs and flowers, and then their way would be over flinty ground again. There were mountains all round. To the south, far in the distance, were the deep

ravines and the red and irregular cliffs of Edom. East a range of hills rose, higher than the mountains of Edom. West, beyond another mountain barrier, lay Galilee and Judea. Those limestone hills between Judea and Arabia, covered with aromatic pine and sweet-smelling laurel, had been crossed time after time by the Jews fighting to impose a belief in the One and Only God on the heathen. If they had not fought and killed for that truth they would have been overwhelmed by the worshippers of false gods. No man had strength to stand alone amongst unbelievers and keep his own mind unmoved. He must fight for his convictions, or lose them.

A multitude of hamlets was strung on the track. Most of these were villages to which each man gave a different name. Paul, if he wanted to remember them, could only fix them in his memory by some special feature: a taller milestone or a well-cut set of cisterns. But he did not want to remember them. These nameless villages had no significance in the history of the nations. Their inhabitants had snatched their living where they could between battles and raids. They had always been at the mercy of the priests and kings who ruled over them and whose deeds made their history. As far back as the memory of man could carry the country had been fought over. Sihon, King of the Amorites, had driven out the Ammonites. The Israelites on their way to the promised land, led by Moses, had driven out Sihon. David himself had ceased his dallying with Bath-sheba to march from Jerusalem and punish the children of Ammon.

When the caravan came to the brook Jabbok where

Jacob and Esau had met, Paul climbed high above the ravine through which the river cut its way from the high plateau of Gilead, to look across the rounded rocky hills over which Abraham had roved with his flocks. Below, in the gully, the drivers squatted on their heels, waiting while the camels and mules drank their fill. The caravan slaves were collecting bundles of dry weeds and breaking branches from the oleanders that fringed the river banks to light their evening fires. Higher up, others were tearing boughs from the oaks. The drivers of the great herd of cattle and sheep sent by cowardly Jacob to propitiate Esau had once done the same.

They spent two nights near the ruins of Rabbah, the Greek Philadelphia. What remained of the town was in a small open valley. Paul walked across the high span of the round Roman bridge and looked down on the rush of water, which embanked on either side and half-warm, ran straight from its spring-head in the lower city. The citadel, with its thick walls and the deep arch that framed the country beyond, rose to the north above him. With such a supply of water the city ought to have been impregnable. But it had changed hands again and again. The Egyptian, Ptolemy Philadelphus, had given it his name. Antiochus the Great, a Syrian, had taken it from Ptolemy. Zeno, a Greek tyrant, had owned it. Aretas the Arab had driven out Zeno, and Herod the Great had driven out Aretas. Herod had not had patience for a long siege. He had pulled down the fortifications, and so compelled the Arabian defenders to come out and fight. Herod's troops were disciplined. The Arabs were not.

They fought in great disorder, horse and foot mingled, and many of the infantry were trampled to death. What a country and what a history! And yet it was only a few halts from the civilisation of Damascus.

Before they left Philadelphia they filled their water-skins at the rushing river. The winter had been dry, Paul's camel-boy told him, and they might not come to running water again until they reached Petra. But unless the water-holes had dried up . . . it was a hot and early spring . . . they were in no danger of dying of thirst.

The country was desolate. Hour after hour the caravan wound its way over flinty ground. The track led between isolated outcrops of rock that rose in flat and sharp elevations or lay in long waves, as if one sea after another of barren lava or limestone had washed over the land. The air quivered with heat reflected from the burning ground, and the light falling on the mountains round the rim of the horizon turned their rocks blue and pink and crimson, and threw strange purple shadows on the plain.

Arabia, Paul found, was a populous country, though it looked so empty. It was larger than Galilee, but its people were not so kind. The guards had to be doubled at night, and even by day a watch must be kept. When they halted before sunset, wild, upstanding men with beards and moustaches, who seemed to spring out of nowhere, came into the camp to sell butter and sheep's-milk cheese. They all wore Phrygian caps and had long hair. Sometimes one of these wild men would pull aside his cloak and show a tame lamb with thick curly wool and small curved horns, which he wanted to sell. The drivers and servants

watched the visitors keenly. The Bedouins, though there was no need for them to steal, were inveterate thieves. Nothing was safe from them. Yet, the men told Paul when he was in the mood to listen, they were the owners of flocks and herds, and had plenty of milk and cheese and the flesh of wild beasts. They had no settled homes, so they could never be caught and punished. They carried their tents with them and pitched them where they pleased. Travellers seldom saw these black goat's-hair tents, for the Bedouins camped in hollows far off in the hills, and never near the tracks beaten out by the caravans.

At night the merchants sitting round the campfires discussed the Arabian tribes, and the chiefs and princes who ruled over them. In Paul's group the fire was lit by a negro, the property of a Roman who was travelling with a string of horses and a large retinue, trading as he went. Paul had several times seen this dealer trying the horses of the Bedouins, or showing off his own. At night and in the morning, when the camp was pitched or struck, he worked with his servants picketing and feeding the horses or directing the packing and unpacking of forage and baggage. But the fire was always left to the slave, who each night lit it with the same ritual. He scraped a hole in the sand and placed a few stones round its edge. Then he put dry grass in the hole and breaking into little bits the withered bushes which he had plucked up during the day, he arranged them one by one on top of the grass. His deep-set eyes were streaked with blood, and he rolled them anxiously as he worked. Some nights he kindled a flame by rubbing two sticks together, and on others he

struck sparks from flints which he told Paul he had picked up on the plain outside Damascus. Later on, when the meal was cooked, if there were no hostile tribes about and there was enough wood, the fire, enlarged, blazed in the darkness, and later still some of the travellers wrapped in their cloaks slept by its ashes.

At first Paul did not join in the talks round the fire. Sometimes he did not even listen. Sometimes he listened for a few moments and then his mind wandered back to his dreams. The slaves and servants with the caravan, seeing his preoccupation, had from the first treated him as a prophet, but their masters after one or two attempts to draw him into the conversation left him alone. They did not treat him with contempt. He often saw one or the other glance at him with kindly curiosity. Absorbed in their own affairs, they ignored him, Paul felt, because they recognized that his aims were not theirs. When he saw them night and morning collect and count their bales, fussing over the tally as if property were the only thing in life that had value, he burned to tell them that their lives were worthless . . . that all life was worthless unless it was lived to give glory to God. But he held back. The merchants showed no sign of caring anything about God. When the time came for him to speak they would have to listen. So, sitting silent by the fire, half-unconsciously Paul watched and summed them up, and half-unconsciously he learnt something from their talk.

One half of the people of Arabia, it seemed, were rich and successful and the other half thieves and robbers. Augustus had brought the country within the influence

of the Empire. Before his reign Roman merchants had not found it safe to go even as far as Petra. Augustus had forced his client kings to police their territories, to make new roads and mend old ones. Now, since his death, these works were being neglected. Some of the merchants thought that the great days of Rome were over. That old goat Tiberius was not an organiser like Augustus. The Arabian tribes were always on the verge of rebellion and the desert roads were thronged with brigands.

"Take them all in all, these Arabians must be the richest people in the world," Paul heard a fat merchant from Damascus assert. He was a man with an unwholesome white face, much broader at the chin than at the forehead. He had small bright eyes, and his large open nostrils and thick lips expressed self-satisfaction and bodily content. He went to Petra to buy the silk that was brought there from China and the Indies. Paul judged him sunk in the flesh without power of seeing spiritual truth, but realised that, in spite of his fat, he was vigorous and insistent and that his fellow-travellers always listened when he made his constant and indignant complaints of the Arabs.

"Look at what they sell from their forests and spice trees! Look at the fees they collect from us, and at what they steal! They want us to buy everything from them, and never buy anything in return. . . . Arabia ought to be a province of the Empire. Without question Augustus should have annexed it."

"Augustus couldn't hold his men on their thrones when he did put them there! The Empire is too big. With

all their surveys and explorations the Romans have never been able to keep down these land pirates." The speaker was an old man whose jet-black brows contrasted oddly with his white beard and brick-red face. When he spoke (and he disagreed with everybody) his long lower lip drooped like a mule's, disgustedly. His cunning eyes, that looked out sideways under his curved black brows . . . surely dyed . . . had an eternal distaste for men and life in their depths that made Paul shiver.

"If the Empire controlled this road to the Indies, we should have some peace," the Damascus merchant insisted. "When we merchants pay our tribute for its use we only pay for the privilege of having our goods stolen by these thieves. The routes ought to be Roman!"

"The desert roads will be locked up soon by something greater than Augustus," a voice put in out of the darkness. Paul saw the keen face of the horse-dealer emerge out of black night into the firelight as he leant forward to speak. His turban was tied round with camel's-hair cords. His under-lip showed beneath his short moustache and on either side of his great nose heavy lines slanted into his black beard. His eyes were alert and amused and yet wistful, and deep wrinkles were dug between his thick eyebrows as if from much staring into sun-struck distances. Paul had concluded that he spent his life on the road. He liked the man.

"The Arabs will wait a long time before they breed a ruler as great as Augustus," the bitter old man said disparagingly.

"I was not speaking of a man, but of the wind," the

watched the visitors keenly. The Bedouins, though there was no need for them to steal, were inveterate thieves. Nothing was safe from them. Yet, the men told Paul when he was in the mood to listen, they were the owners of flocks and herds, and had plenty of milk and cheese and the flesh of wild beasts. They had no settled homes, so they could never be caught and punished. They carried their tents with them and pitched them where they pleased. Travellers seldom saw these black goat's-hair tents, for the Bedouins camped in hollows far off in the hills, and never near the tracks beaten out by the caravans.

At night the merchants sitting round the campfires discussed the Arabian tribes, and the chiefs and princes who ruled over them. In Paul's group the fire was lit by a negro, the property of a Roman who was travelling with a string of horses and a large retinue, trading as he went. Paul had several times seen this dealer trying the horses of the Bedouins, or showing off his own. At night and in the morning, when the camp was pitched or struck, he worked with his servants picketing and feeding the horses or directing the packing and unpacking of forage and baggage. But the fire was always left to the slave, who each night lit it with the same ritual. He scraped a hole in the sand and placed a few stones round its edge. Then he put dry grass in the hole and breaking into little bits the withered bushes which he had plucked up during the day, he arranged them one by one on top of the grass. His deep-set eyes were streaked with blood, and he rolled them anxiously as he worked. Some nights he kindled a flame by rubbing two sticks together, and on others he

struck sparks from flints which he told Paul he had picked up on the plain outside Damascus. Later on, when the meal was cooked, if there were no hostile tribes about and there was enough wood, the fire, enlarged, blazed in the darkness, and later still some of the travellers wrapped in their cloaks slept by its ashes.

At first Paul did not join in the talks round the fire. Sometimes he did not even listen. Sometimes he listened for a few moments and then his mind wandered back to his dreams. The slaves and servants with the caravan, seeing his preoccupation, had from the first treated him as a prophet, but their masters after one or two attempts to draw him into the conversation left him alone. They did not treat him with contempt. He often saw one or the other glance at him with kindly curiosity. Absorbed in their own affairs, they ignored him, Paul felt, because they recognized that his aims were not theirs. When he saw them night and morning collect and count their bales, fussing over the tally as if property were the only thing in life that had value, he burned to tell them that their lives were worthless . . . that all life was worthless unless it was lived to give glory to God. But he held back. The merchants showed no sign of caring anything about God. When the time came for him to speak they would have to listen. So, sitting silent by the fire, half-unconsciously Paul watched and summed them up, and half-unconsciously he learnt something from their talk.

One half of the people of Arabia, it seemed, were rich and successful and the other half thieves and robbers. Augustus had brought the country within the influence

of the Empire. Before his reign Roman merchants had not found it safe to go even as far as Petra. Augustus had forced his client kings to police their territories, to make new roads and mend old ones. Now, since his death, these works were being neglected. Some of the merchants thought that the great days of Rome were over. That old goat Tiberius was not an organiser like Augustus. The Arabian tribes were always on the verge of rebellion and the desert roads were thronged with brigands.

"Take them all in all, these Arabians must be the richest people in the world," Paul heard a fat merchant from Damascus assert. He was a man with an unwholesome white face, much broader at the chin than at the forehead. He had small bright eyes, and his large open nostrils and thick lips expressed self-satisfaction and bodily content. He went to Petra to buy the silk that was brought there from China and the Indies. Paul judged him sunk in the flesh without power of seeing spiritual truth, but realised that, in spite of his fat, he was vigorous and insistent and that his fellow-travellers always listened when he made his constant and indignant complaints of the Arabs.

"Look at what they sell from their forests and spice trees! Look at the fees they collect from us, and at what they steal! They want us to buy everything from them, and never buy anything in return. . . . Arabia ought to be a province of the Empire. Without question Augustus should have annexed it."

"Augustus couldn't hold his men on their thrones when he did put them there! The Empire is too big. With

all their surveys and explorations the Romans have never been able to keep down these land pirates." The speaker was an old man whose jet-black brows contrasted oddly with his white beard and brick-red face. When he spoke (and he disagreed with everybody) his long lower lip drooped like a mule's, disgustedly. His cunning eyes, that looked out sideways under his curved black brows . . . surely dyed . . . had an eternal distaste for men and life in their depths that made Paul shiver.

"If the Empire controlled this road to the Indies, we should have some peace," the Damascus merchant insisted. "When we merchants pay our tribute for its use we only pay for the privilege of having our goods stolen by these thieves. The routes ought to be Roman!"

"The desert roads will be locked up soon by something greater than Augustus," a voice put in out of the darkness. Paul saw the keen face of the horse-dealer emerge out of black night into the firelight as he leant forward to speak. His turban was tied round with camel's-hair cords. His under-lip showed beneath his short moustache and on either side of his great nose heavy lines slanted into his black beard. His eyes were alert and amused and yet wistful, and deep wrinkles were dug between his thick eyebrows as if from much staring into sun-struck distances. Paul had concluded that he spent his life on the road. He liked the man.

"The Arabs will wait a long time before they breed a ruler as great as Augustus," the bitter old man said disparagingly.

"I was not speaking of a man, but of the wind," the

horse-dealer replied. "If ships can sail regularly to the Indies the roads will lose the traffic and close up."

"But they can't sail regularly," the old man objected. "I have traded on the Red Sea and I know. When the wind is contrary you are held up for days. It is only by luck a ship wins through. It is a most dangerous voyage."

"We all trade on the Red Sea, and we all know its dangers!" the Damascus citizen said scornfully. Then, overcome by curiosity: "Perhaps you have heard of some new invention?" he asked the horse-dealer.

The Roman shook his head.

"Not an invention. . . . A discovery. It seems that the wind blows for weeks from the same quarter, and then it changes and blows from the opposite direction. The last time I was at Aila a ship's master told me that you can leave Egypt at mid-summer and be in the Indies at the beginning of autumn, do your business and sail again in sixty or seventy days and arrive in Alexandria early in spring. With a fair wind all the way."

"But that's impossible. It's against nature," the old man disagreed. His eyes slanted contemptuously.

"It actually happens," the horse-dealer replied.

The Damascus merchant shook his head.

"It may happen one year, or even two. But when you reckon on it, it won't happen. If it were true, we should have heard of it before now. Why, over one hundred and twenty ships sail every year for India. The ship-masters would have told us."

"And have their freights reduced because the voyage isn't as risky as you traders thought?" the dealer com-

mented dryly. "Mark my words," he added, "the Arabs know. Why else are they being so troublesome in the Red Sea? Every ship has to arm now against raiders."

"You think they are working together to close the seaway?" the old man asked.

"Isn't it natural? Our women must have pearls and cotton and silk, even at the cost of thousands of lives. If the goods come by sea, the Arabians will be ruined."

"They will do any wickedness for money," the Damascus citizen declared. "But all the same it pays better to bring these delicate goods by land. Roman ladies don't like their China silk stained by sea-water."

"The Romans spoil their women," the old man grumbled. "But spice and pepper travel best by land, too. We must have our condiments strong, especially when the stomach is weak."

"When they get the silk, it is too thick for them," the fat merchant's thoughts were still on the Roman women, "so they pull it to pieces and weave it all over again. They make it as fine as gauze. Then they are dressed, but still naked," he chuckled.

Paul frowned. Now they would begin the usual bawdy talk. But no, they were returning to the periodic wind, multiplying talk about things of no importance. Paul's mind, arrested for a few minutes by the horse-dealer's vitality, drifted back to his vision. Kings and Emperors, money and markets, lust, and routes by land or sea, even that new periodic wind, would all perish. The spirit alone was immortal.

At other fires other groups of men talked. Here and

there a torch flared. Someone was making music. The beat of a drum and the sound of flutes came across the darkness. One by one the voices died away as the talkers dropped off into sleep. The music ceased. Except for the occasional call of one guard to another, or a sudden snort from a dreaming beast, silence fell on the wilderness.

As the caravan moved slowly further and further from civilisation Paul noticed a change begin to come over his companions. The noise and bustle which they carried with them were lost in the vast spaces through which they now moved. All day the silent land made its protests against the dominance of the things of the body. For hours they marched through empty wastes with nothing living around them. The stony earth rising in ridges one behind another stretched on all sides. Here and there, amongst fragments of rock at the foot of a bluff bare bones of men and beasts littered the track-side and spoke without words of the hazards of life. Even when they met other living beings the encounter only stressed the helplessness of man. A few specks would be seen far off amongst the low hills. They would disappear, passing behind a hummock, and in a few moments reappear. The specks would turn into upright streaks. The streaks would grow broader and broader, and at last the anxious watchers could distinguish with relief not a small troop of brigands, but the long, winding line of another caravan advancing toward them. The track would hum with life as the two caravans met and passed. Then, in a moment it seemed, if you looked behind you,

the other caravan had gone, swallowed up by the desert. Before you there was only the silent land, the long, wavy trails trodden out by padded feet or hooves, and far off, glorious in colour, with vivid abrupt shadows the rim of yellow, rose-pink and deep blue mountains. Nothing was left but desolation, silence and empty space and God.

And at night, sitting by the small red fires, watching the planets move on their ways over the free roads of the heavens, there was nothing but God. The talk of the merchants now, even when it started with politics or business, had a way of turning to greater subjects . . . destiny, and the will of the gods, death and what happened after death. Paul noticed that they no longer avoided him. They seemed indeed to welcome his society. Even the fat-faced citizen of Damascus had a less assured air. His smirk and self-satisfaction had gone, and he had an uneasy expression, as if his mental world were losing its firm outline. Once or twice he even appealed to Paul when matters of life and death were discussed. Doubts of the value of an existence spent in moving goods from city to city were obviously assailing him. The desert had taken hold of him, and he needed comfort.

But Paul offered no comfort. He had made mistakes in the past. He must make none now. He had seen the truth in a blaze of insight, but he had to interpret it slowly, by memory and experience. In one flash after another God's scheme for the redemption of the sins of the world was falling into place. His intellect was grasping what before had been inconceivable. Underneath his dreaming

mind a great purpose was growing but the misery which he had gone through had brought wisdom. When the revelation was finished he would speak. But not till then.

It was late one afternoon when Paul's thoughts suddenly straightened out and he had God's plan complete. All day the heat had been intense. It had baked the colour from sky and earth. It had subdued and humbled everybody, flattening out the joy of living to one dead grey level. The light-minded camel-drivers had walked in silence without talk or song, and even Paul, who had ridden since morning with his eyes shaded from the glare, fell into a depression. The glory of his vision faded and a shadow fell across his mind. His conviction that God had given a new revelation wavered. Step by step he felt himself slip back into misery. That keen remorse for his share in the death of Stephen began to stir in him again. Stephen's beautiful body, flung like rubbish into the abyss, was rotting there now. The waste and wickedness in life were terrible. Had he deceived himself? Or was it only his tired body poisoning his mind?

When they reached the camping-ground it was still early in the day. The leading asses pulled up on a flat stretch of land near a great water-hole, almost a lake, above which rose a black, fortified village with a watch-tower. The long line of the caravan stopped, huddling into knots and Paul, without waiting for his camel to crouch, slipped down from its back and gathering up his cloak, walked quickly away across the flat and round the water's edge to the further shore of the lake. Here he sat down on the bare ground under a clump of stunted

trees. Across the lake he could see the movement and colour as the daily routine of pitching tents and counting bales began. The beasts were being led to water, and, already here and there the evening fires showed puffs of flame and smoke. Paul pulled his cloak over his head to shut it all out. He must be alone. He held his mind steady and slowly forced it to release its hold on the details of daily life and to go down to where, in the depths of his soul he might find and face himself. Soon the outside world had vanished and Paul was alone with his thoughts. He had imagined he was doing the will of God. Had he only been following his own? He had prayed. He had tried to humble himself. Then the vision had come. Why had this depression followed? Stephen had prayed, too. And Jesus had prayed, and yet they were both dead. Was death the only event that could so move men's imaginations as to break through their self-complacency and prepare them for a new revelation? Had there always been this gate of tragic events between the unfolding of one order and the next? A small light began to shine at the bottom of Paul's mind. Men were afraid of the break-up of the old. But there must be break-ups. If there were no changes, there would be no new truth. The mind was like the earth. If it was not disturbed it grew nothing. God had sent Jesus . . . perhaps His son . . . and Jesus like the scapegoat . . . had taken the sins of the people on his head. The price for redemption had been paid. The Law was fulfilled.

Paul's cloak fell from his head. He no longer needed protection. He was unconscious of the outer world.

Stephen had been right and he wrong. The death of Stephen had been the cause of his own awakening. It had so stirred his soul that it had been able to receive this new seed. God had humbled him allowing him to fall into sin. But Paul's evil had served God's purpose. If he had not sinned so grossly he might still believe that righteousness came from carrying out the Law . . . that salvation could be gained through ritual. Without humiliation he would never have learnt that the spirit alone gave life.

Paul's depression had gone. That strange vitality was flooding his soul again. His sins were forgiven. The sins of the whole world would be forgiven. The new revelation was simple and easy, as all great things were, and it must reach far beyond Judaism. For if Jesus was Messiah, was he not also the manifestation of the Highest God for which both Greeks and Romans hoped? Not for the first time in the history of the Jews, Divinity had entered a body and walked on earth. If Jesus, a great spirit, had been born into a body, this new incarnation proved that men, too, were incarnate, for God had sent Jesus as He had made man, in His own image. And the resurrection which showed that Jesus lived after death proved also that men made by God with His own attributes could live eternally. They had only to have faith. God would do the rest.

Paul's brain worked with a clarity and precision that left him without a doubt that its conclusions were revelations. It put together things hitherto unrelated, things which he now saw were part of God's purpose. It had

once seemed incredible that he, an unknown Jew, could rouse the empire. There was nothing incredible in it now. The man Paul was nobody . . . a bandy-legged Jew, an abortion . . . but God was all-powerful. God could work with any tool. Paul saw clearly that he had risen above the Law because he had kept it so strictly. If, in his youth, he had rebelled against its discipline, he would still be under its bondage for unless you tried a thing to its limits you never discovered its limitations. Then, too, there was his deformity. Had he been as other men he would have led the life they led. But from birth he had been cut off from his fellows. This had driven him to thought, and thought had brought personality and the power of vivid speech. So now in spite of the humiliation of his crooked legs he could always impress other men. He never sat long in any assembly without someone turning to question him. He never passed unnoticed. God, he saw, had trained him. He had been born for this work.

Doubt had vanished from Paul's mind. Nobody could disbelieve who felt as he did. How had he ever, even for one moment, imagined that men wandered in darkness unguided when God's guidance was there certain and clear? Dreaming had ended. Knowledge had come.

A troop of small boys, with sticks in their hands, were racing down from the village, intent on some game. They pulled up abruptly close to Paul. He watched them form into order. Three or four stood on guard round one of the big stones that littered the ground, and one, a taller boy, halted close to it. Behind them smaller and more

fearsome boys waited tense with excitement. What were they going to do? At a signal the boys moved nearer. They seized hold of the boulder and pulled it back. A very small boy yelled and jumped back in terror. Underneath the stone a coiled-up snake lay asleep. Paul saw the big boy catch it under the belly with his stick and flick it out into the open. The snake, which was long and black with grey markings, lifted its head to strike. Two or three of the younger boys fled in terror, and from a safe distance called out :

“Spit on him ! Spit on him and he’ll run !”

The bigger boys boldly attacked the snake, and when it turned to escape pursued it across the hard earth and beat it on the head until it died.

It was impossible to think with such a disturbance going on. Paul rose to his feet. He was not annoyed with the boys. There was no room for annoyance in his mind. He stooped to pick up his cloak. The boys turned from their examination of the dead body of the snake. One of them suddenly sniggered and said something to his companions, and Paul saw that he was pointing to his crooked legs, mocking his deformity. He turned and looked at the boys. They fell back into a clump, and Paul heard one of them say :

“Perhaps he’s a holy man, and will put a curse on us !”

As he caught the frightened whisper, Paul suddenly realised that he no longer minded his deformity. The surge of new life within him had swept away all petty self-consciousness. Even the old pain that lay in memories of past condemnation and contempt from Jewish

and Gentile neighbours had gone. He cared as little for his crooked legs as he cared for the dead body of the snake. He slung his cloak on his back again, smiled at the boys, and walked away round the lake to the camp.

II

ON a flat stretch of ground close to the tents the horse-dealer was trying a raw horse, and every man in the caravan seemed to have gathered to watch him. The camp followers and poorer travellers were scattered singly or in groups. Some of the merchants stood in a cluster, while farther on a bunch of dark-faced Bedouins hung together, their riderless horses held by their slaves behind them. The spectators made a loose fence with gaps, enclosing an oblong space like a hippodrome, up and down which the frightened, sweating horse was being put through his paces.

Paul paused beside the Bedouins to watch, too. The horse was evidently their property. They followed its movements with keen dark eyes, and at each buck or shy turned to nod or comment to one another. Sometimes a sudden exclamation sounded like admiration, or a guttural remark apparently expressed criticism, but Paul could not translate. He only knew a few words of their language.

The horse was a clean-limbed stallion with a golden skin, and a mane and tail almost black. A much finer animal, Paul thought, than the heavy-necked Greek horses whose hogged manes and plaited tails and long,

barrel bellies were so much admired in Tarsus. The flat-boned fore-legs of this desert beast scarcely seemed to touch the ground, and when the Roman encouraged it into a canter, its long tail, plucked to a fine point, streamed behind it like a pennon. The dealer rode well, with a firm grip on its bare back and an easy adaptation to its abrupt, jerky movements. He cantered round the course and under his skilful guidance the half-trained beast rapidly gained confidence. It steadied at every stride. He relaxed the reins a trifle and with his knees pressed the horse into a gallop. Then he pulled it back into a slow canter, slowed it down to a trot and finally to a walk, pacing it backwards and forwards before the Arabs so close that Paul could see the broken nails on the long, flexible fingers that held the reins so lightly and strongly, and the hard muscles moving under the thin, shining skin of the stallion. One of the Bedouins left the group and the horse turned his head at the sound of footsteps and gave a loud whinny. The Arab walked a few yards with one hand on the stallion's shoulder. The Roman bent his head listening, and then he nodded, patted the beast on the neck and gathering up the reins started off at a gallop. He raced down the line of spectators, round the blunt end of the oblong and up again on the further side, thundering on at full speed. At the point exactly opposite Paul he wheeled the stallion abruptly, and dashed across the ground, charging straight at the Arabs as if to run them down. They scattered like a flock of birds but Paul stood his ground and the dealer pulled up within a foot of him. The stallion was forced

back on his haunches. His tail swept the ground and his forelegs were flung out so straight and rigid that his hooves dug into the earth and threw up ramparts of soil before them. He recovered himself with a scramble, and arching his beautiful neck against the pressure of the bit, pawed the ground with a fore-foot.

All round the course the spectators burst into cheers, and indeed, Paul thought, it was a fine show of horsemanship. The Roman threw up his right arm in the salute to the Emperor, then he loosened the reins and allowed the animal to relax his pose.

"I'll buy him," he called out to the Bedouin owner, who ran forward to catch the bridle.

"He's a fine beast, is he not? Gentle, too, though he was so frightened," the dealer said to Paul, as he threw his leg over the stallion's shoulder and slid to the ground.

Paul put out a hand to scratch the horse under the jaw-bone, but he started back snorting, showing the transparent pink lining of his nostrils. The Arab, who leant against the neck of the terrified animal, soothed him and said something rapidly to the Roman.

"He says it's your smell," the dealer translated. "Each nation has a different smell, and yours is new to him. He bucked at mine when I first mounted him, but he has got used to it now." He caught the horse by the head and held him for Paul to handle. "He must get used to foreign smells. A horse, like a man, is no use if he's afraid of strangers."

The Bedouin evidently understood, for he nodded vigorously, showing rows of clean white teeth.

"We must put an Italian bridle on him," the Roman said, and the negro slave ran to the pile of horse furniture that lay outside the tents and was back in a moment with an armful of headstalls and bits.

"Look at that!" The dealer showed Paul a curb set with sharp points. "We call it a wolves'-teeth bit. I never use it: it is too cruel . . . fit for a Goth! The best training for a horse is kindness. The Arabs treat them as well as they do their children." He flung the curb aside and selected a bridle with a flexible bronze bit. The cheek-pieces were ornamented with gold and the frontlet had a gold star. "It's old, but good," he said.

The Bedouin took the bridle, and holding the horse by the forelock, deftly slipped off the old rope headstall letting it fall on the ground. He pushed the bronze bit into the horse's mouth, and still holding his forelock, pulled the bridle over his ears. The stallion rolled his eyes but submitted.

Something had happened to Paul. All the small details of daily life had become significant again. His love of companionship had returned. He was still full of that odd vitality. It seemed to ooze out of him. But he was no longer aloof from men, absorbed in his vision. Because God valued His creatures, all their affairs had value. The Damascus merchant, who had rolled up, looked curiously at him.

"You look as if you have been amusing yourself finely. Where have you been?" he inquired.

The Roman, putting the last buckle of the bridle into place, glanced round at Paul.

"Women?" He lifted his eyebrows.

Paul shook his head vehemently and the dealer smiled.

"Have you been dreaming?" he asked.

"Not of women. Of God," Paul answered bluntly.

The fat merchant stared, and then laughed incredulously.

"Why do you dream of God? Are you a Diviner?" he questioned inquisitively.

"No, I am a Jew. We are forbidden to practise magic," Paul replied shortly.

The fat man was full of self-complacency again. He had lost his deference and that uneasy expression. God was not so manifest in this place built by man, Paul thought. But night and black darkness might bring back fear and the sense of His presence.

"Don't you know that the Jews have no Diviners?" the Roman said scornfully. "And we Romans also think mathematics and astrology dangerous. Who can foretell the future? The Augurs never do. They tell us what we ought to do in a given case. . . . But, then, we are men of action. Most Jews are dreamers. It is a fine animal." His eyes were on his horse, now being led up and down to cool by the negro slave. The spectators had dispersed.

"I've met as good traders amongst Jews as amongst Romans. Better, in fact." The Damascus man spoke dogmatically, but the dealer was not listening. With a nod to Paul, he had walked away to give his slave some further orders about the stallion.

The merchant turned to Paul with a sly smile.

"I can't see why an astrologer, or even a pious Jew like

yourself, should not sometimes amuse himself with women."

"Women are not in my mind. I have no desire for their love," Paul said coldly. He hated this man, those heavy jowl and thick lips showed that he had no insight, even the feeblest, into the life of the spirit.

"Only for the love of Jehovah?" the merchant asked.

"There is not room for both," Paul replied emphatically. The merchant was one of those who deny what they have never experienced, what they will never have the courage to experience, and yet, even while denying, are full of curiosity about the spiritual experiences of other men. He would always exalt the body above the soul! Paul's whole soul rose suddenly in revolt against such men and he turned away and walked across the ground to join the horse-dealer. But the Damascus man turned, too, and went with him. The Roman, with a last word to the lingering Arabs (did he say "To-morrow"?), told the slave to picket the horse by the tents. The slave led the beast away, and Paul and his companions began to walk towards their fire.

"I've been telling him he might love women as well as God," the Damascus man observed.

"Religion seems to wipe out every other passion. Do you never hanker after women?" The dealer cocked an amused eye at Paul.

Paul shook his head.

"You don't want to gratify the body when God guides!" he replied.

"Ah, you are young yet," the Roman said kindly.

"Wait! See if you feel like that when you are old. That is the test. The gods love the young, but divinity withdraws from the elderly. Remember that if you live to be sixty!"

Paul nodded.

"I'll remember. But God never withdraws from those who have faith," he answered. He was sure he liked the Roman.

"What do you mean by faith?" the Damascus man asked curiously.

Paul hesitated.

"It is a new revelation," he said slowly.

"I thought you were a Jew?" the merchant objected.

"I am a Jew; but this revelation . . ." Paul stopped. How was he to put it? It was a tale more wonderful than any that Greek or Roman had to tell.

"We Jews believe," Paul began again. Then he again stopped. That was the old approach. He must try another. "It is our Jewish Law . . ."

"I know all about the Jewish Law. I don't want to hear of it! Tell about your new revelation," the Damascus citizen interrupted.

Paul choked. It was hard to speak of sacred things before this mind that so ignored the spiritual. But even this gross man had a soul, which now, perhaps, could be saved. But it was too late to explain. They had reached the fire.

The night had fallen. The distant mountains were lost in an orange and purple haze. A light shone from a window in the black village above them, and there was a

glint like dull steel on the dark stretch of water in the water-hole.

The men lying round the fire were talking. Its flames lit up their keen, interested faces. Paul and his companions stood for a moment to listen. The talk was of the wonderful city of Petra, with its cliffs and its caves. It was the next city they would reach. Some of the travelers, like Paul, had never been there before. Those who had been were eager to tell of the strange city cut out of cliffs five hundred feet high. Some miles northeast of it, they said, you came to a steep hill of white chalk, then to a winding, precipitous path, and so to a gorge which led to the red and purple and yellow and sky-blue and black and white rock city. Just so, Paul remembered, they had talked in the bald wilderness before they had reached Philadelphia, and passing through Philadelphia had dropped it into oblivion and discussed the desert and its dangers. On a journey, as in life, you faced one incident after another, and passed and forgot. It was always on and on to another and yet another event.

"Petra?" the horse-dealer said suddenly. "I loathe the place."

The men round the fire made room for him. He sat down, and in his turn made room for Paul.

"The walls of the gorge are so close that two horsemen can't ride abreast, and Petra itself is like a city in a nightmare. Uncanny Temples and houses in caves with facades cut out of the solid rock. The doors are at the top of hundreds of steps. The sculpture is supposed to be mag-

nificent, but I've no taste for such things. You couldn't get a horse up those stairs! I prefer the desert."

Some of the men laughed.

"Surely 'on another man's horse with your own spurs' you could climb any stairs," one of them quoted.

"Even on a borrowed horse I wouldn't ride up a pyramid," the dealer replied.

"I'm bored with Petra. I've been there a dozen times, and this Jew has had a revelation," the Damascus citizen put in self-importantly, looking round for a seat.

The talk about Petra stopped. Everybody looked at Paul.

"I've told him we want to hear it," the Damascus man said, and sat down on somebody else's saddlebag.

"Yes, tell us," a dozen voices called out.

Paul glanced round the circle. They were all strong men, most of them young. They were all sunburnt, and all wore turbans. (The Romans, like other travellers, were forced to wear the turban or die of the sun.) Now, after sundown, several of them had taken their turbans off, showing locks of dark tangled hair or heads shorn so closely that they seemed hairless. They came from different countries. They would worship different gods. Each man would have his race's imaginations of skies peopled with Beings, beautiful or homely, united by family ties, who shared amiably their divine power or fought one another for it. Their gods had blood and sex, and could be as wicked as men! Paul hesitated. False though their creeds were, to criticise them would put every man

against him. In his contact with these alien minds he must express the new truth so that it appealed to something they all held in common. Formerly when he had preached he had had no certain salvation to offer. Now he had. Gentiles could not accept the Law, but if he could find a thought common to all they would see that the new revelation was for them and for every nation. But what thought? The God of the Jews, one and Omnipotent, pure and aloof, untouched by man's wickedness, and yet the Father of His people? No! No! That idea was too subtle for wayfaring men. Even amongst devout Jews many were gross enough to think they pleased Jehovah by offering Him bloody sacrifices! Sacrifice! That was the one ritual all men had in common.

"Why don't you tell us?" the man from Damascus asked, aggrieved by Paul's long silence.

"I was thinking," Paul replied.

"Well, think aloud! Begin, anyway," the Roman said.

For another moment Paul sat silent, his head bent and his heavy brows drawn together. Only a Jew could follow the involved reasoning based on the giving and fulfilling of the Law. So it was useless to speak of Judaism, and though all men sacrificed to their gods, to win these men he must also touch an emotion common to all. Paul suddenly lifted his head and cried out:

"It begins with death! Is there any fear like the fear of death? God made us for immortality, but every man must die. Death is the curse that has fallen upon us all."

The passion in his voice startled his hearers. One or

two drew more closely together. The Damascus man's mouth fell open.

"Great Jove! I didn't think it would be like this," he said.

Paul paid no attention to him. He was on fire now and fearless.

"I used to teach that the Lord God Almighty would not give eternal life to any man unless he became a Jew. . . ."

"What about our gods?" somebody murmured, but the Roman said curtly:

"Let him talk. You can object later on."

The man was silent and Paul went on:

"I do not insult any man's religion. There may be many lords and many gods, but only one is almighty. The new revelation is from Him. It is good news for us all."

Paul paused. Every eye round the circle was fixed on his face. How was he to put it so that they would believe? As simply as he could.

"Death has been done away with," he said.

"What's that? What does he say?" one man demanded of another. "How can death be done away with? What does he mean? Our gods have said nothing about this."

"Listen," Paul said. "Up to now we have all sacrificed to atone for our sins and, if we may, to gain eternal life. But just as the sun in rising puts out the light of the stars, so this new revelation has dimmed the light of our old creeds. For God has sent a Great Spirit to earth . . . Jesus . . . who has taken our sins on himself. He died

to pay for us all. Our debt has been wiped out, and we are free."

"What's he talking about?" interrupted the cross old man who had been half-asleep by the fire. "What Great Spirit? I never heard anything of this."

"He came to the Jews first," Paul replied.

"How could this Great Spirit be a Jew?" the old man asked querulously. He was wide awake now. "The Jews have only one God."

"He was Messiah . . . a messenger from God . . ."

"But you say he died?" the old man objected.

"He was crucified in Jerusalem," Paul replied.

"Crucified? Was he a Roman?" one of the other men asked.

"No. He was a Jew," Paul answered.

"Our gods would never accept the sacrifice of a Jew!" the old man said angrily.

"I heard something about it," broke in a man whom Paul did not know. "He led a rebellion in Jerusalem. His followers tried to make him King."

"No! No!" Paul protested. "That is not true. He was killed because God sent him to die for us."

"But if he's dead and done for, what's the use of it all?" a voice inquired.

"He is not dead," Paul said eagerly. "God raised him from the dead. He was seen again after his death."

There was a chorus of questions and assertions from the listeners.

"Who saw him?" "Where was he seen?" "I don't be-

lieve in ghosts." "I do." "Well, I don't believe they come to us. We have to go to them!"

"Did you see him?" somebody demanded of Paul.

His disciples in Jerusalem saw him, and I too, but in a vision," Paul replied.

"Are you sure you did not dream it?" the Damascus citizen asked anxiously.

"Or invent it," the old man scoffed.

Paul shook his head.

"It is not an invention. I did not get it from any man. No one taught it me. It came from God."

"It's a tale of the genii. The man has been fascinated," another man exclaimed.

Paul saw the speaker thrust his hand under his cloak to finger the amulet on his breast, and answered him directly:

"I am not bewitched. I was told the truth in a vision. Many other people who followed Jesus when he was on earth also know it to be true."

"Jews always pretend that revelations from the gods come to them only. It is a stale trick!" the old man said scornfully. And at that suddenly Paul took control of the assembly.

"Think for yourselves," he commanded boldly. "God is a Spirit. He made man in His own image. Jesus is a Great Spirit. God sent him to earth to help us. He entered a body, but his body was killed. After its death his spirit was seen . . . alive. It proves that we, too, are spirits in bodies, and can, if we want to, live on after the death of our bodies."

"How can we live without bodies? That seems nonsense to me." The cross old man was more angry than before.

"How can flesh and blood be immortal?" Paul countered eagerly. "Why, we see them decay! We have a spiritual body. God regards only the life of this spirit, and now He commands us to worship Him spiritually. He no longer asks animal sacrifices. He demands a sacrifice of our hearts and wills."

"I've heard them talk of a Jewish Messiah but what is he to us? How could this Jesus atone for Greek sins? Jehovah who sent him isn't a Greek God." The old man was now contemptuous.

"Jehovah is the Creator of the whole world. He made us all," Paul said, and at that the discussion broke out again furiously. Paul saw how he had roused them. But he did not care. It was good for men's minds to be roused. You could not find God in lassitude.

"But on what conditions can we live for ever? There must be conditions. Do you mean that we need not sacrifice any more?" the Damascus citizen demanded.

"Yes. We insult God by offering Him gross and bloody sacrifices. That horror of bloodshed is ended . . . the only condition is to accept the new revelation," Paul replied plainly.

There was silence for a moment as if Paul's certainty had impressed his hearers. Then one man who up to now had said nothing, spoke. Paul had noticed this man before. He had a narrow, shaven face with sombre eyes and his lips were tight. He wore no sign of his profession,

but Paul had put him down as a priest, probably of some Oriental cult, on his way to Egypt. The man's voice was high and thin and had been carefully trained. He did not speak angrily but seriously. His Greek was much better than Paul's.

"If you abolish sacrifice you break the one link between the gods and man. By sacrifice we share the divine life."

"But the communion between God and man is a thing of the spirit, not a question of eating flesh together," Paul interrupted scornfully. If the man were an Egyptian, well, Paul despised the gross rites of Isis. The priest did not seem to resent Paul's scorn. He went on as if no one had spoken :

"Moreover, you will bring the vengeance of the gods upon us," he finished decisively and was silent.

His protest had its effect.

"He is perfectly right. The gods will destroy us if we give them no honour," somebody said, and at once angry voices broke out on all sides.

"Sacrifices keep you from wickedness. If we hadn't to atone we could do what we liked."

"How else can we get rid of guilt? It takes away our only chance."

"No decent God would accept the sacrifice of a Jew?"

The glances thrown at Paul were menacing. Suddenly the Roman said :

"They sacrifice horses in India. Horses and bulls. I don't mind about the bulls. Perhaps, if I were faced with the loss of something dearer to me, I might even sacrifice a horse. I don't know. I doubt if I could do that."

Was the Roman speaking seriously, or did he only seek to divert the talk? Paul did not know. But he answered impetuously :

“That is all over. No sacrifice is needed now.”

The Roman ignored Paul's interruption and went on calmly, addressing himself to the company like a man sure of a hearing :

“I feel helpless when talk of these mysteries is going on,” he said. “We travelling men as a rule care little for such high things. I respect other men's knowledge, but I can't judge what is true and what is false. I am content to wait for certainty until I die. When I am not at my farm, I live all day in the open desert or on the road, but when I am in a city I do as others do. Patience is good, and even in a town, worship keeps off the restless city feeling. I sacrifice to any man's gods, so long as they don't demand my horses!”

There was a laugh.

“You will have them killed when you die, I suppose, so that they may go with you?” someone asked, and the talk veered suddenly to ordinary gossip.

“He came all this way to buy a stallion,” Paul heard one man say. “I expect he has a private worship of his own. Horse-gods!”

Were they tired of immensities, Paul wondered? How hard it was to convince men that the spiritual life was the only real life!

But the Damascus citizen had no mind to let the talk veer.

“Could a Greek or a Roman accept your plan? How

does it work?" he asked in a worried voice, and at once interest centred on Paul again.

"It is not my plan, but God's," he replied. "It is for all the world. If we have faith our sins will be forgiven. But our whole lives must be our sacrifice. Could these filthy blood-sacrifices please a Great and Spiritual Being?"

For a moment nobody answered, Paul saw that, thanks to the Roman, the men's indignation had gone. Was he going to convince them? But no! Not yet. It was the cross old man.

"Where on earth are we going to get our meat?" he asked angrily. "Did you think of that before you started out to abolish sacrifice? Are we to live on pulse?"

"Is it a job fit for God's servants . . . this butchery of the altar . . . killing and selling meat and fowls? The priests have better work than that!" Paul replied hotly.

"What work . . . if there is to be no sacrifice?" the thin priest asked.

"Reminding men of God . . . keeping the house of God aloof and holy, so that we have a place of refuge from daily life where we can worship . . ." Paul stopped. The Jews in Jerusalem said Jesus had wanted to destroy the Temple. But they had misunderstood him. Men needed a place of prayer.

Paul's opponent shook his head.

"It is impossible to introduce minor innovations without injuring greater things. If you begin to break bits off an established religion, where will you end? Men have not time to think themselves. They cannot exercise their

own judgment. They must accept a creed as a whole, taking the truth from their priests, who are in touch with the gods."

"But that would mean believing that God speaks only through priests," Paul retorted hastily. "No Jew would accept that! We put our prophets first. The priests come after."

One or two men nodded in agreement.

"The priests have too much power." "They claim too much and not all for the use of the gods," they said. The talk seemed to have veered round to Paul's support again. And then that strange and subtle man who might be a priest of Isis said gently, addressing Paul:

"You are a Jew, are you not?"

Paul nodded.

The thin-lipped man smiled slightly and went on:

"You are not devout, are you? I thought that you Jews got to the Elysian fields by strict dieting? But you appear to eat anything. Perhaps you are not religious . . . in spite of your visions."

Paul flared up at once.

"Not religious . . ." he began.

"There is no need to be angry. I am only interested," the other interrupted smoothly.

"All my life I have carried out the strictest ordinances of the Jewish Law," Paul paused.

"And now?" the man inquired politely. "What has changed you?"

For a moment Paul did not answer. The anger died out of his eyes. This man, whose whole face told that he was

a fanatic, had a purpose. He was trying to inflame the merchants against the new revelation, and against Paul, too. A renegade from any creed, and especially a renegade from Judaism, would receive small mercy. The Jews were unpopular. Their exclusive creed and their insistence that theirs was the one perfect ritual made other men hate them. So Paul, seeing the danger, answered reasonably :

“All my life I have thought much of these things. We consider it unlawful to go into a Temple without washing our bodies, but we are ready to pray and sacrifice when our minds are polluted and disordered by sin. God sees into the most secret places of our hearts. Do you think our impure minds escape His notice? But if by the sacrifice of Christ our sins are washed away, we can now go fearlessly into God’s presence. Without his sacrifice no ritual can save us.”

“No doubt it is less trouble to do away with sacrifice but if your vision is delusion, what then?” The priest was now openly against Paul.

“It is easy to destroy authority,” he went on, “easy to destroy property, easy to destroy our Temples. In fact, it is easy to destroy anything. For once you destroy reverence, all destruction follows.”

The thin, high voice ceased. There was a moment’s silence as if the men round the fire were considering. Then first one and afterwards another and another spoke out his real thoughts and the atmosphere was not favourable to Paul. Why should Jews claim so much? Who was Jesus? Had anyone except the Jews ever heard of him?

Renegade or loyal, Jews always wanted to dominate. Nowadays new ideas were dangerous. In every country creeds were breaking up or mixing with others. National cults were losing their meaning. The gods of one country were invading another. There would be war in heaven if not on earth. Innovations must be stamped out.

Paul listened. He sat, on fire with his message, waiting impatiently for a chance to speak. He was not afraid. It was not courage, he saw. No courage was needed. His revelation had swept all fear out of him. The bigger emotion had flooded out the smaller. The priest (if he were a priest) watched him with the shadow of a smile on his thin lips. The Roman leant forward to push a brand into the fire.

"Be careful. That man is dangerous," he said in a low voice, and Paul nodded. He had seen it for himself. . . . After all, why should he expect immediate acceptance of the new truth? Truth was not always self-evident. He himself had for years believed in the rigid system of the law. Was it likely that Egyptians and Jews and believers in the other established creeds within the Empire would at once welcome a new revelation which cut across all their settled beliefs and destroyed them? Of course those who held power in Temples would fight to destroy it. Every priest would try to stifle it. What an enormous task lay before him! But truth always conquered falsehood . . . if you fought hard enough. Nothing could kill the new revelation. It must and should go on. Paul turned to the company round him and at the note of

authority in his voice men ceased their discussion and listened.

"We are not born with a knowledge of God. It is dim, like something seen in a silver mirror. But our knowledge grows clearer. It means change. But there must be change if we are to grow from childhood into manhood. I tell you that God is calling you into greater freedom. He has told me to preach this new truth but He alone can make you believe it."

Nobody answered, and Paul rose to go. The fire was out. It was time to sleep. The Roman rose, too.

"It is long past my bed-time, and talk always makes me drowsy," he said, and the circle broke up.

But as Paul stumbled across the ground in the darkness to his tent he heard the dealer's voice beside him:

"I hope you appreciate the way I got you out of that trouble. That man is a priest of Ephesian Diana."

"I thought he was a priest of Egypt," Paul replied.

"No! Didn't you notice his voice? He is a eunuch and sour. Diana of Ephesus is a fierce goddess, and demands mutilations. She is too Oriental. Our Roman Diana is kinder. The other men are simple. They would not harm you unless he hissed them on; but I think he meant to do it."

"I thought so, too. But nothing will stop me from proclaiming the truth," Paul exclaimed.

"Why throw away your life? Your truth will die with you if you are so rash," the Roman remonstrated.

"Never! Even if it costs my life, God will raise up other teachers."

They stopped outside the tent of the Roman. He put a hand on Paul's shoulder.

"It seems waste to me," he said. "I feel you are a man, and I like you. That thin-lipped skeleton is neither man nor woman. I hate these gods and goddesses who demand emasculation! Our creative power . . . the one thing we have in common with divinity . . . denied and destroyed. But, then, I'm not religious. I only believe what I see."

"Perhaps those are not always the most important things," Paul suggested.

"They are to me!" the dealer replied. "Jupiter! How men love marvels! And most of them lies! Though I've seen strange things in my life." He paused for a moment, and in the darkness Paul saw his white teeth gleam as he smiled.

"Some things seem nonsense to me, but I judge for myself. I've heard men say there is a race in the mountains in India whose feet turn backwards, and that when Alexander sent for them they refused to go because they can't breathe in any climate but their own. I don't believe that! Men will tell you to cure a cold by kissing a mule on the nostrils. I know that to be a lie. I've spent my life with horses and mules and I've tried it. But your tale is not unreasonable. If there are gods why should they not come to earth? If they are greater than we why should they not try to help us? But don't you go about telling priests who make a living out of the Temples that the gods don't want sacrifices. You won't get a calm hearing if you do!"

"I must say what was given to me to say," Paul replied stubbornly.

The horse-dealer laughed.

"You are plucky, anyway! But remember that your plan may seem so simple and easy that a fool can understand, but knaves won't want to. I don't say I agree. I'm a free man. I don't want any one, God or no God, to pay my debts."

"The debt of the sin we are born with is too great for us to pay," Paul answered.

"I'll do my best! I'll be responsible, anyhow," the Roman said, and then before Paul could reply he added, "I'm returning to Damascus. I must get back to my farm. It is on the Orontes. Would you care to go with me? I came all this way to get the stallion you saw yesterday. I'd heard of him. It's a stud farm. I'm a breeder, too, you know. You'll do no good at Petra. They'll only kill you. They don't like foreigners. It's no good saying 'Let them kill me,' for that won't spread your truth. You had better come with me."

Paul thought for a moment. Why should he go on to Petra? What had its magnificence to do with him? How could he influence its inhabitants? He did not speak their language. The caravan merchants, too, would be so much occupied with their business in a great centre of commerce that they would not have time to listen to his message. Why should he linger in Arabia? Its wild and scattered people would be hard to find. In any case . . . Petra and Arabia . . . how could such places compare with world-conquering Rome? . . . If the Romans be-

lieved the whole world would believe. . . . One day he must go to Rome. But now it would be better to begin amongst people whom he knew. In Damascus and Antioch men would stop to hear a new thing. . . . God would provide a way of escape for the men of Petra and Arabia.

Paul thanked the Roman and said he would be glad to accept his offer.

"All right, we will join the first returning caravan. Good-night. I commend you to your Jehovah."

The dealer dived under the flap into his tent, and Paul went on to his alone.

III

PAUL'S journey back to Damascus was easy. Gaius, the horse-dealer, asked him not to talk openly of his opinions while under his protection. He had no objection, he said, to small talks with the men in his following, or even with the elders sitting in the gates of the villages in the evening but he asked Paul to avoid discussion in the market-place. Gaius had his reasons. There was neither justice nor law in the open desert or in the scattered hamlets of Arabia. Each city government was weak or strong according to the character of its governor. Inside the Empire all established creeds were tolerated, and Judaism was one of them but new revelations were not encouraged. Even the worshippers of Isis had found it hard to establish their creed when it had first been introduced from Egypt. There were no troubles like those which rose out of religious discussions. Gaius warned Paul not to look for help either within or without the Roman dominions. Even if his teaching only led to riots within Judaism, he would be severely punished. A fight between Jews would unsettle any Government, and in case the disturbance was in Arabia . . . and there were many Jews there . . . tribes with whom Gaius had no ties might make the row an excuse to steal his horses.

"Also," the Roman said, "though I am not a religious man myself, if human authority was given us by the gods, we ought to support it."

Paul's reason agreed with this upholding of authority. But inside his mind something greater than reason stirred. His revelation was to unite the world. How could men believe unless they heard? He respected his host's wishes, but he discussed the question with him.

"But inspiration also comes from God. What is to happen when authority and inspiration conflict?" Paul asked.

"Without authority human life cannot be carried on," Gaius replied.

"Without inspiration there can be no growth in the knowledge of God," Paul retorted.

At that Gaius shrugged his shoulders. If the priests were wise and were the mouthpieces of the gods, as they claimed, the new might gradually change the old. But priests were seldom wise. When authority, given by the gods, conflicted with inspiration, also given by them, the priests allowed the clash to become public, and so the populace, not knowing which side to choose, got into a ferment. Priests were the same all the world over. Even those who did not believe in their mysteries kept them going to gain a living.

When Paul said that in the history of the Jews prophet had often fought priest, Gaius reminded him that the Romans had no prophets, and that to them civic authority meant divine authority. To keep the peace was the Roman ideal, and even in the provinces, where the pro-

curators were supposed to administer Roman law high above all creeds, local priests claiming authority from local gods could influence the magistrate in any question of the suppression of disorder.

"How did this Jesus you tell of get crucified, if the Procurator of Judea was above such influence?" Gaius asked.

"The priests told him. . . ."

"There you are!" Gaius cut Paul short. "They will do the same to you," he added.

Paul agreed.

"But if priests or Governments drive me from one place, I will go to another," he said, and Gaius looked at him half-affectionately, half-critically.

"You have not a balanced mind," he told him. "It is the usual result of a too strict training. Men are not like horses. If you train a horse to amble you spoil it for galloping. If it breaks loose, it doesn't gallop, it goes on ambling. But men, when they revolt always refuse to do the thing they have been trained to do."

It was natural, Gaius thought. The human mind demanded freedom. If it got none, it either withered or rebelled. That balance between freedom and license was the problem which all Governments had to face. The Romans perhaps solved it better than other nations.

"What do Governments matter compared with the shortness of life and its uncertainty?" Paul asked impatiently.

"Life may be short, but while it lasts it is good," Gaius replied. He would never agree, he said, that the things

of the body were worthless. Faith and hope and love were great thoughts but wealth and power were great, too. He was interested in Paul's ideas because he liked Paul, but, for himself, he had no hesitation in rejecting them.

"The gods have never meant much to me," he answered when Paul urged him to accept the new revelation. "I think you must stand up to them. If they are just . . . which seems to me doubtful . . . they will like you the better for it." No, sin did not bother him, Gaius said. He did the best he could and what more could anyone do? The deep wrinkles on either side his big nose split into kindly curves as he smiled, and Paul loved the man.

"Why should I take to a new creed when I have so little use for the old ones?" Gaius asked. "I don't even worship Neptune who invented the horse. Your religion is good enough for slaves, but I am a free man. I want no God to be my sacrifice. I have always paid my own debts and I always will."

When Paul talked to his fellow-travellers he was not more successful. The merchants, he found, like Gaius, were not easily influenced. They would listen to any marvel that passed the time round the fire in the evening, but by the morning they had forgotten all about it. Serving-men and slaves were not so forgetful. People in distress who had been shaken loose from the things of this life made the best listeners Paul discovered. It seemed that misery, like the desert, made disciples.

In Damascus Paul parted from Gaius. They were to meet again. On his next journey to Antioch Paul had promised he would visit the farm and see the horses.

And in Damascus, freed from his obligation to the Roman, Paul at once started to preach. He threw himself, with all his energy gathered to a point into the work. In the market-place, in the synagogue, on the caravan camping-ground outside the south gate, in the villages round the city, he told his experience. He spoke with such passion that he roused passion in his hearers. Men either agreed, fascinated, or excitedly sided against him. The orthodox Jews were hostile, but a small number who had accepted Jesus as Messiah joined him enthusiastically, and soon Damascus seethed with talk of this new teaching which was Judaism and yet not the creed of the Jews.

Paul had been preaching for months when suddenly he found that the police were watching him. The Governor, who held the city with a garrison for King Aretas, had evidently been told of the foreign doctrines, neither Jewish nor Greek, which Paul was preaching. Paul's friends heard rumours that he was about to be arrested. They urged him to escape while he could. Even now the gates were being watched. In Antioch there was a colony of the followers of Jesus, led by Barnabas. Antioch was cosmopolitan. New and wider thinking was tolerated. He had better go there. So one night Paul was lowered in a basket out of a window of a house built on the city wall. He descended safely into the ditch that ran round the walls, and from there he walked, footsore and with little money, to Antioch.

IV

AT Antioch Paul found Barnabas. This time it was a joy to be with him. Barnabas was generous and intelligent too. Paul had always known it. At their first meeting they talked for hours. It was easy to explain, for Barnabas did not criticise . . . then. After their first long talk he agreed that Paul's revelation was a new link with the unseen and might be a way of salvation for the Gentiles. So Paul was admitted to the community and became one of the group of teachers.

The story of the life and death of Jesus had been brought to Antioch after the murder of Stephen. Many Greek-speaking Jews had left Jerusalem then. They had feared a renewal of the High Priest's power which might press hard on them as sympathisers with Jesus and the reform of Judaism. They had not foreseen how soon that trouble would blow over, but they had remained in Antioch. The Jews there were not strict. The older families who had settled in the city generations ago had ties of business or friendship with both Greeks and Romans, and their open-mindedness made it easy to spread the new gospel. A number of the settled Jews and those God-fearing pagans who attended the synagogue had already joined the new sect before Paul arrived from Damascus.

After Barnabas had introduced Paul to the little group of Christians his doctrine attracted much attention. Now that Paul's mind was made up, he was sure of himself. He felt full of vitality and enthusiasm and he knew he could hold men with the new strange experiences he had to tell them.

And men did listen. At first it was the Jews who talked about Paul's vision, but soon in Antioch and that part of Roman Asia near by interest spread amongst Gentiles too.

Until Paul's arrival Barnabas and his friends had preached that Messiah had come. Jesus had taught a reformed Judaism, they said, discarding outgrown customs which had lost their spiritual value. But Paul's revelation went further than that. Barnabas did not see then, and indeed Paul himself did not at first realise how far, though he was quite sure that a truth had been told him which had not been revealed to other men. Sometimes when he and Barnabas had been discussing it struck him that Barnabas did not agree to this as cordially as he might have done. It seemed as if he preferred his own recollections of Jesus to Paul's new revelation. Barnabas' memory was surely at fault too, for how could the Christ have spoken to men in so homely a way? If he were the Son of the most High God, glory and splendour and a sense of mystery must have surrounded him. But as Barnabas remembered the teaching, it was often, Paul thought, flabby doctrine, ill defined, with a lack of clear thinking that must lead to moral laxity. There was no bone in the creed of Barnabas. It could never have come

from God. A little soreness began to grow between Paul and Barnabas. The difference was slight, and Paul realised that he as a mere assistant could not decide important matters, but he pointed out to Barnabas how this lack of clear thinking led to practical difficulties. There was, for example, the question of the reception of converts. The entry of new members into the community must be specially marked. A ritual was needed for this which would rank above the ceremonies of all other creeds. What was it to be? Baptism, following the rite by which John the Baptist had baptised Jesus himself, or circumcision according to the ancient ritual which Moses in Egypt had taught the Jews?

From the beginning Paul's mind was quite made up.

If they decided on circumcision, he argued, the new revelation would be a failure. To circumcise would definitely graft it on to Judaism, and Romans and Greeks would never agree to become Jews. (Barnabas did not realise how their own people laughed at circumcised Greeks!) The political differences between the races were mixed up with these customs and so complicated the religious question. The new creed ought not to touch old quarrels. Baptism would leave everybody free. It was a new rite without associations. If you had been circumcised before, what matter? If uncircumcised, again what matter?

Barnabas wavered. Sometimes he agreed. Then he said that if they made a definite rule it might mean trouble with orthodox Judaism. The first disciples whom Jesus had chosen had made no break. They had not changed

their customs. In Jerusalem they still worshipped in the unreformed Temple, teaching that Messiah had come. Why not let people please themselves? Ceremonies didn't matter much, Barnabas urged. To do what Jesus commanded was more important. Then why not baptise? Paul insisted. They must not drift.

The little soreness grew bigger. Finally one day Barnabas suggested that Paul should go to Jerusalem. He ought to make acquaintance with Peter and James, the brother of Jesus. He could stay with Peter. The difference was after all a small matter, Barnabas said, and if men loved one another such matters of form ought not to count, but as Paul was worried he would feel easier in his mind when he had talked it over with the first disciples of Jesus. If, after he had discussed it with them he persuaded them that his revelation completed the gospel of Jesus and that the Law was fulfilled and finished, the converts could be baptised only. If he did not convince them, they must also be circumcised. But the decision must be left to Peter and James.

So, three years after the death of Stephen, Paul went back to Jerusalem.

V

PETER'S house was in the south-west corner of Jerusalem and was built above the fortifications. From the roof you could see straight over the old quarry out of which the stones for the fortifications had been dug and away down the cool clear distance to the long stony slope of the valley of Hinnom beyond. Looking east across the flat roofs of the city you saw the Tower of Antonia and the dome and pinnacles of the Temple.

The walls of the fortifications were not good stonework like Herod's Towers. They were only rubble set in coarse mortar and plastered. Peter's house was not well built either, but then Peter was poor and could not afford a good house. It worried him to see that where the walls rose above the mud floor of the roof the stones had not been chiselled true, and that here and there the masons had had to jam wedges of stone chippings between the blocks to force them into line.

It was late afternoon and Peter and James sat together on the bench on the roof waiting for Paul who still slept below. For days now, it seemed to Peter, he and James had done nothing but listen to Paul. Peter had never before met anyone who talked so much. Ideas poured out of Paul's mind in flood, one thought rushing on top of

another like a torrent of snow-melted water. It was impossible to keep pace with him. Peter did his best but in spite of himself his brain lagged behind, and he sometimes grew so tired with the effort that he felt he was not grasping anything that his guest was explaining. Even James, Peter saw, was now and then confused though his mind was stronger and more just than Peter felt his would ever be.

James and Peter had worked together so long that they knew each other's feelings without need of words, but Paul had confused that also. To-day Peter felt he was no longer sure of James. He must have it out with him. He could not stand uncertainty. He glanced at James sitting peacefully beside him, as usual absorbed in the view. James loved the views from the house-top and could sit for hours doing nothing but gaze at them, while Peter got restless if he sat idle for more than a few moments. Peter knew he was impatient and unstable. Jesus had made fun of him because he wobbled, asking how anyone could build on such a stone. . . . What was in James's mind? What was his opinion of Paul? It was a good moment. Paul would sleep long. No doubt he was tired out. He had been telling his adventures all morning. They were easier to listen to than his ideas. . . . James was enjoying the silence and peace. Would he be in the mood for more talk? Peter put out a feeler.

"Paul's a great talker," he suggested.

"He thinks too much. But he is full of power, and he has a good mind," James replied absently.

Peter flared up at once.

"And he knows it too! I can't understand half of what he says. If you haven't brains, he thinks you have nothing."

James turned his eyes from the valley and looked at Peter. James's face, Peter always thought, was like the face of Jesus with the fire left out. It never lit up so that you saw the spirit shining through the eyes . . . but James had just the same calm way that Jesus had had of looking affectionately at you and waiting to hear what you wanted to say. He had some of the same power too of forcing the truth out of you without saying a word. Peter met his calm regard defiantly for a moment before he gave in.

"I can't help it, James. He wears me out," he grumbled, excusing himself. "It's not his adventures. I liked his tale of being let down outside the wall of Damascus in a basket. It's these other ideas."

"Paul's a learned man . . ." James reflected.

"So was Jesus. He knew far more than Paul does," Peter interrupted hotly.

"Come now, Peter, you know quite well that Jesus was not learned," James protested. "Not one of us was trained as Paul has been. All the education we got was reading and writing. Jesus taught himself the Law."

"Well, he had something far better than learning."

Peter knew that he had changed his ground. James would see it at once. But James was like Jesus in that too. He never triumphed if you made a slip in your argument. He would help you to express yourself. . . . Naturally you took advantage. . . . Paul would never let you off so

lightly. Peter shifted his eyes from James's face. It made him feel ashamed. He looked away across the mud floor of the roof to where the stone roller stood in the corner. There you were! That alone would justify you. Look at the trouble he had taken flattening out the fresh mud on the roof in honour of Paul, and Paul had not once noticed it.

He went on in a hurry :

"From the way Paul talks you would think we knew nothing of Jesus. And another thing, James. It is three years since Paul had this great vision. Why has he never come to see us before?"

"He was afraid we would not believe in his sincerity," James explained.

Peter met James's eyes, and took no trouble to hide the suspicion in his own.

"Paul's no coward," he said.

"It may be true in spite of that. We can't see into his heart," James replied.

"What could we do to him?" Peter asked.

"Give him up to the priests," James answered.

Peter frowned.

"Does he think we are such friends with the priests?" he demanded pettishly.

James did not reply. His eyes had wandered again to the beauty of the light on the stony slopes of the valley. There was only a thin skin of soil over that bony place. One bad torrent of rain would wash it all off. Peter waited impatiently for a few moments, and then he said irritably :

"You do nothing but defend Paul. What's the use of it when I see for myself how he puzzles you too?"

James ceased to gaze at the valley. He smiled at Peter.

"Are you suggesting that I am a fool, Peter? After all, think. . . . Three years ago Paul hated Jesus, and now he comes to see us, the friends of Jesus. Why?"

"Barnabas made him," Peter rejoined crossly.

Again James made no reply, and again Peter felt he must justify himself.

"He ought to have come to see us before he preached one word," he began slowly, then went on with a rush, "But first he goes into Arabia, and after that he starts to preach what he calls 'his' gospel. He makes Damascus too hot to hold him. Then he escapes to Antioch to work with Barnabas, and now, when he has made Antioch too hot to hold him, he comes to us! But does he ask our advice? Does he treat us as leaders? Never! And from the way he talks you'd think he was as important as Barnabas."

Peter felt his case was just. There could be no answer to it but it was well to put it as strongly as he could. Sometimes James was too kind, or so anxious to be kind that he saw only one side of a subject. You couldn't trust his judgment. Jesus had been kind, too, but he was never taken in. He knew every motive you had.

"Paul says that he went into Arabia first because he had to think out what had happened to him." James said mildly.

"That's just what I don't like," Peter put it hastily.

"It must have been then that he invented these new ideas of his. Why did he want to think things out? We never had to."

James deliberated a moment.

"Perhaps clever men need clever ways to enter the Kingdom," he answered.

Peter turned on him.

"What does Paul care about the Kingdom?" he protested hotly. "He never mentions it. He never asks what Jesus taught about it."

"His mind is always in a ferment, Peter," James urged, but Peter would not listen.

"You excuse him all the time. I tell you he doesn't want to learn anything from us."

"Well, I can only ask again what changed him?" James repeated.

"He must have had some sort of a vision," Peter admitted reluctantly. "But how can he be right? Why, he is not even a good Jew, and yet he claims to know more than we do."

"I have not heard him claim to know more than we do. How do you know that he is not a good Jew?"

"Could a good Jew ask us to give up circumcision?" Peter remonstrated.

"You are unjust. We must try to be fair to him," James said in his even voice, and Peter flared up again.

"I am not unjust. I ask you, is Paul's message the same one that was given to us?"

"We may not quite understand it," James answered soberly and Peter stared at him aghast.

"You are not going to give in to him, are you?" he asked in dismay, and James replied:

"I don't know. It does not follow that Paul is wrong because he does not look at things as we do."

His voice was firm. Peter knew that tone. Once James had made up his mind to be fair there was no end to the mischief he might do.

"But James," he expostulated, "I can't teach these new ideas. I've never taught anything but what Jesus taught. I can't begin all over again."

"If Paul had a vision, his message is later than ours and we must listen with humility." The firmness in James's voice frightened Peter and when he was frightened he always lost his temper.

"I knew he'd bring trouble the moment I saw his ugly face," he cried. "We've been in a whirl every since he came. I wish he'd never come near us!"

"Hush, Peter!" James hurriedly leant forward and touched him on the knee. "Don't speak so loudly. Somebody is coming up the stairs."

Peter's anger dropped from him, and they both listened.

"It is Paul. He walks wide because of his bandy legs. I wonder if he heard me?"

"Of course he heard you. You were roaring like a bull," James whispered, and then they sat quiet, listening to the laboured steps that climbed the stairs. In a moment a head appeared at the top of the staircase and Paul stepped out on to the roof. He wore no turban and his dark hair was cut short, Roman fashion. James and Peter

rose to receive him. James hastily inquired if Paul had had a good afternoon sleep and Paul said that he had. Peter quailed as he watched his keen eyes move from James's face to his own and back again. Had he heard?

"It is pleasant now that the heat of the day is over. Will you not sit down and enjoy the air?" James was talking to gain time, Peter saw, but what was the use of that? There was one good thing about Paul. He would never beat about the bush. When he meant to fight, he fought. If he had heard, he'd fight. If he hadn't, he wouldn't.

"Thank you. I won't sit down." Paul spoke decisively, and Peter knew at once that he had heard. But James was right. There was power in Paul's face . . . in the big hooked nose and the bushy brows that met over his fiery eyes.

"I heard what you said. Why are you sorry I came to Jerusalem?" Paul looked Peter straight in the eye and spoke abruptly.

Peter braced himself. There was no use dodging. He was in for it now.

"We all agreed before you came. You brought this quarrel with you," he answered shortly. Paul frightened him . . . but he hoped he would be able to hide his fear.

"We can agree now if you accept my revelation," Paul declared, and Peter turned to James.

"There, you see! I told you he doesn't want to hear about Jesus. He only wants to talk about himself," he complained passionately.

"There is no use dragging James in," Paul said. "James is ready to hear. It is only you who suspect my

message. You are too self-willed to listen and weigh what I say."

James put his hand on Peter's shoulder to restrain him.

"Peter cannot reconcile your message with ours. That is all, Paul," he said pacifically.

"I am not seeking to please Peter. My revelation came straight from Christ."

"It's not what Jesus taught," Peter interrupted.

"You mean the Son of God?" Paul asked coldly.

"We called him Jesus!" Peter snapped.

"His earthly name may have been Jesus," Paul began, but Peter did not let him finish.

"You hear him, James? I told you he didn't care!" he blurted out bitterly.

"Hush, Peter!" James pressed his shoulder. "You are not being fair. You don't understand. You must listen."

"You seem to think I invented my Gospel," Paul taxed Peter directly.

Peter wrenched his shoulder free from James's hand.

"You are as proud of it as if you had!" he said, and walked away to the corner of the roof wall. He leant against the rough blocks of stone and looked over the city roofs to where the Temple rose against the eastern sky. The sun was declining. Its rays struck against the gold dome and dazzled you. . . . Jesus had worshipped every day in the Temple when he was in Jerusalem. . . . How could Paul understand what the Law meant to a Jerusalem Jew? He was accustomed to heathen temples and to synagogues that were not sacred. . . . What would Jesus have said to Paul? Jesus had been interested in

every man's talk. He had even listened to Judas. Would he have watched Paul as he had watched Judas, with that kind, half-earnest, half-humorous look, and would Paul, like Judas, have talked his very soul out to him? Peter began to feel ashamed. He was being a coward again. He hesitated. Then he turned and walked slowly back across the house top.

"I never thought you made it all up, Paul," he apologised, abashed and miserable.

"Every word is true. It was a revelation from Jesus Christ himself," Paul declared confidently.

"I always was muddle-headed," Peter admitted. "Everybody is not clever," he added, his face half turned away, "but Jesus said that God sometimes revealed things to the simple that He hid from the learned."

"But not to the stupid," Paul cried. "We must use our minds. We may be children in affection but not in intelligence."

"Jesus said nothing of your plan." Peter repeated mulishly. He had apologised enough. Of course Paul would take advantage.

"It was not revealed then because you were like babies," Paul retorted imperiously. "You could not have digested it. But it was always in the mind of God that this new truth should be revealed, and through me."

Peter gulped, and James said hastily:

"Yes, Paul. But Peter is right too. Jesus did not teach as you do."

Peter looked gratefully at James. When it was anything serious he always understood. But Paul would

never understand. If you couldn't think as he did he would have no mercy. He would search out your smallest mistakes and rub them in. . . . But he had evidently seen Jesus. That, at least, was true! James was right. There must be no fight. He would control himself. . . . Forgive . . . what had Jesus said? . . . to seventy times seven.

"We must come to some agreement. Why not sit down and talk it over again?" James suggested.

So they sat down in a row on the bench facing the valley. The noises of the evening were beginning to rise up from the city below, but they heard none of them. Paul was the first to speak.

"I have told you of my vision. I have told you of how I went to Arabia and came back to tell it in Damascus, and had to escape to save my life. I have told you of how our work at Antioch has grown. And still you do not trust me."

He suddenly turned to Peter.

"You do believe that Christ is Lord?" he asked, and Peter answered honestly:

"At first we did not think of it. Afterwards we saw that he must be Messiah. I don't know more than that!"

"He is our Deliverer from the coming wrath," Paul declared emphatically.

"He said nothing about wrath," Peter interrupted warmly.

"He must have spoken of God's punishment of sin," Paul protested incredulously.

Peter shook his head stubbornly, and James said:

"God is our Father."

"And has a father no right to punish his children?" Paul demanded sternly.

"We believe ours is kind and merciful," James replied. "He knows we must fail, but He gave us the Law to lead us to life, not death. If we obey, it means joy and salvation."

"It means nothing of the kind!" Paul denied peremptorily. "I have followed it all my life and there is neither joy nor salvation in it. If we expect to be saved by the Law we deceive ourselves."

"But God chose us to be His people!" Peter put in vehemently.

"That is at the root of it all!" Paul interrupted with passion. "Even if we Jews all escaped death . . . if each man of our race found salvation . . . how could we be happy? Is God too narrow to include all the races He has created in the promises? What joy can there be in a creed that denies salvation to every nation in the world but our own?"

"You can't be responsible for everybody. Gentiles must accept the law," Peter retorted hotly.

"Yes. But can they carry it out?" Paul replied forcibly. "Would any Jew give a surety that converts will escape damnation? I argued for years to persuade myself that if the Greeks and the Romans and even the Barbarians accepted our Law they might escape eternal death. But it was useless. You do not know the Gentile world as I do. Foreigners cannot carry out our ceremonial Law; their habits . . . and they are born into them . . . make it

impossible. If their salvation depends on that they are lost. Even we ourselves may be lost. If we fail in one point, we fail in all. You know it as well as I do. There is no certainty."

"But, Paul," James suggested, "many of our teachers say that if foreigners carry out the moral law only God will have mercy."

"I once hoped that, too, but if the ceremonial laws and our devotion to the Temple are useless why did God ordain them?" Paul replied gravely. "No! no! We cannot set aside the Law so easily. Even God Himself could not do that unless it had been fulfilled. It is valid until then, and all its provisions stand."

"Then why are you preaching that we are to give up circumcision if the Law is our only chance of salvation?" Peter burst out angrily.

"Because it has been fulfilled," Paul said. "I have told you before that that is my revelation. Listen! When I first heard that Jesus preached there was something above the Law I was angry, for then my only hope was in the Law. I was still more angry at the idea that he was Messiah, for 'He that is hanged is cursed of God.' When I heard that you said Jesus had appeared to you after his death, I was enraged . . ."

"Why I saw him myself!" Peter protested.

James put a hand again on Peter's knee warningly, but Paul, full of the expression of his thought, resented nothing.

"Yes! yes! I know now that I was wrong," he admitted. "When the revelation was given me on the road

to Damascus I did not at once understand. Later the full truth came to me. I consulted no one, I did not even come up to Jerusalem to see you. I went into Arabia alone. And there I found the way of escape. I saw that God had sent His son to fulfil the Law and so end it. He was sacrificed for our sins. If we accept his atonement, our faith will save us."

Paul ceased, and for a moment no one spoke. James took his hand from Peter's knee and leant forward, evidently thinking hard.

"How can faith save us? Surely we must do something, too?" he asked.

"Anything not done as the result of faith is sin," Paul declared.

James hesitated. His mind was working slowly. Then he put another question:

"But, Paul, it is part of our faith, it is not, that there is one God?"

Paul nodded. James went on:

"Well . . . even devils believe that. Surely that shows that faith without action leads nowhere?"

Paul shook his head.

"No action of ours can lift the curse from us. Salvation is God's gift. Our only hope is in faith."

"But Jesus never spoke of ending the Law!" Peter interjected angrily. "He said we were not to think he had come to do away with the Law or the Prophets. And surely you don't believe that devils will be saved," he finished triumphantly.

"Wait a moment, Peter," James intervened. "Are we

quite certain we understand what Paul means when he says Jesus abolished the Law?"

"I cannot have made myself clear," Paul replied impatiently. "I never said the Law was abolished. On the contrary I establish the Law, because I insist that Christ fulfilled it and so made us free. What we could never do he did for us. He satisfied the requirements of the Law by bearing our punishment. If we believe that he has paid our debt, we shall live for ever."

There was another silence. The light had gone. One side of the long valley was sombre. In a moment it would all be black. Against the darkening sky the great bulk of the Temple was only a darker patch. It seemed to Peter that in the darkness Paul's insignificant figure had faded away too, and that his proud and energetic spirit had taken possession of them all. Then suddenly he remembered, and cried out impetuously:

"But, Paul, you have forgotten the Kingdom. The Greeks and the Romans could come into it. Jesus allowed even Samaritans to enter. It belongs to the poor and the humble. Even to stupid people like me.

"Unbelievers, rich or poor, will find no place in the Kingdom of God," Paul replied severely.

Again no one spoke. Then James said:

"Jesus taught, as all good Jews teach, that if we repented even a little, God would forgive much. He said nothing about taking our punishment on himself."

"He would have done it, of course. But why did he not tell us about it?" Peter said. He suddenly leant forward and hid his face in his hands.

"I must give the message as it came to me, Peter." Paul's voice was friendly, but there was no wavering in it.

"I don't say it's not true, Paul. You have a wonderful mind and I am nothing before you. But it is not the same message." Peter spoke wearily and again James put a hand on his shoulder, this time to comfort him.

"Paul may not have been given any message about the Kingdom," he said kindly.

"It is not what Jesus taught," Peter rejoined. "But I have had no education, and I can't stand up against Paul. He doesn't understand. He pushed Jesus so far off."

"But, Peter, you yourself believe that the Christ is a great Spirit, the Son of the Most High God." Paul's voice was imperious.

"Yes! yes! I know! Don't say it so often!" Peter interrupted. "He may have been all that, but he was our friend, too. He loved us."

"He died for our sakes. Is there a greater proof of love than that . . . to lay down your life for your friends?" Paul asked sharply.

"Yes," James said in his tranquil voice, "to do it for your enemies."

Peter lifted his head.

"How could he help dying, when the only way out of it was to raise the people and kill the men that hated him? He couldn't do that when he had taught us we were to love one another. He would rather die himself than have other people killed because of him."

"He died to ransom us from eternal damnation," Paul

declared hotly.

"In spite of the great love of God?" James asked.

"Was it not great love to send His own Son to die for us?" Paul insisted.

"It doesn't sound fair," Peter muttered half aloud.

"Not fair?" Paul cried out. "Not fair that God should destroy sinners? Not fair that He should demand sacrifice? Why, even Gentiles believe that they must offer sacrifices to escape from death!"

"I wasn't thinking of ordinary sacrifices. I meant that Jesus should be made to suffer for us all did not seem fair," Peter replied.

"But he wanted to suffer, and if the penalty for sin is death and he has not paid our ransom, how are we to escape damnation?" Paul asked forcibly, and Peter, overwhelmed, found no reply.

Darkness had covered Jerusalem. In the city the lamps that had been lit outlined the streets, and outside the walls here and there on the hillsides scattered lights made spots of brightness.

"Let us put off further discussion for a day or two. If we pray God will show us the way out," James said. He rose from the bench. Paul rose, too, but Peter sat where he was. If James expected to influence Paul, he was wrong. Nobody could influence him.

"But you know," Paul answered James, "if we pray in faith, that proves we are no longer under the Law."

"How do you make that out?" James asked, astonished.

"Why, of course, if we ask for God's spirit, we mean

to follow its guidance. But the spirit doesn't come from obedience to Law. It comes when we listen with faith," Paul asserted.

Peter, alone on the bench listening, could stand it no longer. He sat up straight and called out :

"Oh, James, don't begin again. I'm sick and tired of discussion ! He wants to ride rough-shod over everybody. All he cares for is getting his own way. Are we never to have peace?"

There was a silence, and then Paul said quickly :

"But, Peter, I want peace, too. I never dictate to any man about his faith. I don't want to put obstacles in anyone's path."

"Why do you do it then?" Peter asked peevishly.

"I think I hoped you would come to think with me." Paul's voice changed and broke, and he said hastily, "I did not mean to hurt you, Peter. And I do care for more than my own way. I would willingly die if by my death I could save one soul. But I must give the message as it was given to me."

"Nobody is asking you to die," Peter said gruffly. Then he, too, rose from the bench.

"Let us go down to supper," he said.

Afterwards he remembered in shame the candour and kindness in Paul's voice. But that was not until he had ceased thinking of how harshly Paul had stated his case and of how little interest he had shown in the tales Peter had wanted to tell him of Jesus.

VI

MARY of Magdala was going along close to the blind wall of the street outside Peter's house when she saw Peter turn out of the courtyard. His head was bent, and he muttered to himself as he came towards her. He was walking so quickly that she felt he would pass without seeing her. She put out a hand and caught him by the sleeve.

"Don't you know me, Peter?" she asked.

Peter turned his red-rimmed eyes and looked at her. At first he did not seem to recognise her. Then he said:

"It is you, Mary, is it? I did not see you." He pushed his head-gear back and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand.

"You look worried, Peter. Is there anything wrong?" Mary inquired.

"I am worried," Peter replied emphatically. "Paul is staying with us."

"Paul? So he has come at last. What is he like?"

Peter frowned.

"He's not much to look at. His legs are crooked and he's got a big nose."

Mary smiled.

"I didn't mean his outside. Everybody says he has an insignificant body. I meant himself. Is he interesting?"

Peter hesitated.

"He talks a lot, if that's what you mean."

Mary jumped to a conclusion.

"Don't you like him?" she asked.

"I don't know," Peter replied bluntly. "He discusses everything in heaven and earth, and he twists things till I don't know where I am. James says I am not fair and that there may be something to it," Peter stopped short.

"Something in what?" Mary demanded.

Peter did not reply. He looked rather helplessly at her, Mary thought. She knew Peter well. He was not stupid, but he was simple. He felt things deeply, but in intellectual matters he had always been one of the dispossessed. He could not express what he felt, and it was incredible to him that he might share or alter thoughts which other people took for granted they could understand. Mary saw now that he was turning a difficult idea over in his mind. She waited patiently. In a moment Peter took her by the arm and drew her back up the street out of sight of the courtyard door.

"Look here, Mary," he said. "Did you ever hear Jesus say that we would be damned if we didn't believe what he told us?"

Mary shook her head.

"We all did believe it," she answered.

"Did you ever hear him say that if we hadn't got faith we couldn't have eternal life?"

"Never!" Mary said promptly.

Peter went on doggedly.

"Did he ever tell us that we must throw over the Law and give up circumcision to escape from the wrath of God?"

"I never heard him speak of the wrath of God. Jesus never talked like that." Mary spoke indignantly. "He told us to be ready to throw away life rather than lose faith in people, and never to doubt God's goodness, and we were to forgive everybody. . . ."

"Yes. That kind of faith!" Peter interrupted. "But that's not Paul's sort. He has come along now with a new plan all laid out, and he says we'll be lost if we don't believe in it."

"What sort of a plan?" Mary asked.

"He says the Law is finished and done with. What do you think of that?" Peter went on headlong, without waiting for Mary to reply. "James is trying to agree with some of it, for the sake of peace he says but I can't. Paul thinks I do it on purpose and his eyes blaze out at me, but it's not my fault. I don't understand what he's driving at, but I am sure he's wrong." Peter's voice grew more and more gloomy as he spoke and when he stopped Mary did not know what to say to comfort him.

"Don't you agree with any of it?" she asked, and Peter looked puzzled.

"Every now and then he says something that sounds true. But when he begins to explain I get mixed. I always understood when Jesus talked. Everything he said

seemed true. But after I've listened to Paul for a time I don't know where I am."

"But if Paul had a vision, as people say, some of it may be true, even if you don't understand it all," Mary said.

"That's what James says. But how can Paul's plan be true when Jesus never spoke of it?"

"Have you told Paul that?" Mary inquired.

Peter's eyes were full of anger and bewilderment, but Peter's anger, Mary knew, was easily roused and soon over.

"Of course I've told him," Peter replied. "But he won't listen. He doesn't care anything about the kingdom. He thinks it will come after we are all dead! I tell you I don't know where I am. Nothing is simple as it used to be. When Paul talks Jesus begins to fade away, and I can't even remember what I felt like when he was here." Peter's anger had gone but the bewilderment remained.

"That's not all Paul's fault," Mary explained. "I've felt that, too. It's like recalling a wonderful dream. You grope after remembrance but the beauty has gone. The only thing to do is to go on. We can't live in the past when there's work to be done in the world."

Peter was not looking at her. She doubted if he had heard.

"Dust!" he said suddenly. "Dust! Sifting over everything, covering it up, burying the good news. Then they begin to build new gospels above it. Jesus has only been dead four years and already nobody remembers what he was like."

"I do. I shall never forget," Mary declared promptly. "But you haven't told me what Paul's new gospel is?"

"I don't think I can." Peter paused, frowning. Then he went on: "Paul thinks God sent Jesus to die. As a sacrifice to free us from our sins." Peter paused again.

"Jesus did think he was a sacrifice, you know," Mary put in and Peter answered hastily:

"Yes, yes; but not all cut and dried like this plan. Paul says that God offers us a contract, and we've got to agree to it. It's something legal that binds God."

"Like that old contract with Abraham?" Mary interrupted.

Peter nodded.

"Yes. And you can't make him see that everything that matters is inside ourselves? . . . But I'm no good at explaining."

"Jesus did want to free us," Mary said.

Peter sighed.

"He was always kind and pleasant . . . as if you mattered more than the things you said." In spite of herself Mary sighed, too, and for a moment they both stood silent. Mary knew that Peter, like herself, was recalling Jesus. Nobody had ever understood as he had.

"I'd like to hear about Paul's vision of him. He did see him, didn't he?" she asked.

"Why don't you go in and ask him yourself?" Peter suggested. "He'll tell you all about his plan. He talks of nothing else. You may be able to make something out of it even if I can't. He's leaving soon. He wants to settle

everything before he goes. But how can we? . . . I don't want to fight if I can help it."

"Why should you fight?" Mary inquired.

Peter looked at her shrewdly. Then he shook his head.

"You go in and you'll see. No! I won't come. I must go away and think. I can't help feeling there's trouble ahead of us," he said, and walked away up the street.

VII

MARY stood and looked after Peter. At the end of the street he turned south. He was going to the garden of Gethsemane by the way outside the city walls . . . the path by which the Temple servants had brought Jesus the night he had been arrested, to the house of Caiaphas. That was an old story now. But Peter was wrong. Dust had not covered Jesus and his teaching. Somebody would always blow it off.

Mary went in at Peter's door and crossed the courtyard. It was a hot day and there was nobody about. The wooden lattice-work windows of the house were shut. In the shadow of the roof staircase a big dark-red jar stood full of fresh water. Probably Peter, in the early morning, had filled it from his bottle-shaped cistern. Peter was proud of his cistern. It was lined with cement and cut deep in the rock with steps leading down to it, so that even when the water was low pitchers could be dipped in and no rope was needed. Peter's wife never allowed bits of broken water-pots to be left in the cistern, as other careless housekeepers did. She always had them fished out. She must have gone to market.

Mary pushed the house door open. The horns fixed on its edge, top and bottom, had been well oiled. They

rotated in the cups of the wall stones without noise. Inside the room the sunshine filtered through the lattice work of the closed shutters and made patterns on the floor. At first she could see no one. Her eyes followed the raised bench that ran round the walls and she saw that in the corner a man sat writing. His head was bare and the bars of light from the lattices fell across his body. His shoulders were broad . . . he was heavily built. He wrote slowly and carefully, she noticed, and was so absorbed in his work that he had not heard her enter.

Mary must have made a movement for the man suddenly raised his eyes. For a moment they stared at one another.

Mary, her eyes grown accustomed to the dim light, could trace each wrinkle of the crow's feet that spread from the corners of his eyelids, and the heavy lines scored on either side of his big hooked nose. She took a step forward.

"The peace of God be upon you," she said.

"And upon you, oh woman." The man put his tablets down. His eyes were kind.

"Are you Paul?" she asked.

"Yes, I am Paul."

"I am Mary of Magdala," Mary explained.

Paul said nothing. His expression changed suddenly. Mary knew that look. She had seen it so often in people's eyes. So he was just like the rest? Her face began to grow hot. The blood rushed from her neck to the roots of her hair until even her ears, she felt, were red. But she did not turn away. She stood silent facing Paul, who

was silent too. After a moment she could stand it no longer.

"It is not very kind of you to think that, Paul," she said.

"Think what? I never spoke." Paul was astonished.

"Contempt needs no words. Your eyes spoke," Mary replied.

"I can't help my eyes," Paul retorted.

"No, but you might help your scorn."

"You are blaming me? Was it I who sinned?" Paul asked, and there was amazement in his voice.

"You mightn't be so scornful if you had," Mary answered.

Paul's tablets dropped to the floor.

"Don't you know that we reap death if we sow sin?" he demanded.

"Who could know better?" Mary replied.

"A man's body belongs to God. He shames God when he joins himself to a harlot."

"What about the harlot, Paul? What about her shame?" Mary interrupted.

"Her shame?" Paul demanded. "Has a shameless woman shame?"

"Is she not human? Is her body not degraded too?"

Paul's eyes blazed.

"You are ready with your tongue, woman!"

"It was part of my trade to be brazen-faced," Mary said bitterly, turning away. She had better leave. He would never understand.

"You are trying to justify yourself, but the Scriptures

say that the face of a harlot is harder than a rock," Paul retaliated.

Mary turned abruptly and faced him again.

"Is mine so hard?" she asked, her eyes full of tears.

The blaze died out of Paul's eyes. The harshness faded. Was he going to be kind?

"You are no longer a harlot, I hope," he said. Mary's tears dried up in scorn.

"You are a hard man, Paul," she flamed. "You don't mind how you hurt. Once a sinner is always a sinner with you."

"No, no, Mary. I am not hard," Paul defended himself. "But if a man devotes his body . . . the temple of God . . . to a harlot. . . ."

"You have said that before, Paul, and I know it all better than you do. But I was a fool to expect you to understand. Even Peter doesn't always. And he is my friend."

"No wise man makes friends with a harlot, Mary. There are too many risks," Paul said gravely.

"No harlot wants friendship from men that are afraid they may lust after her," Mary cried hotly. "You are just like other men, Paul. You look at everything from a man's point of view. Jesus was the only one who ever saw from ours . . ." She stopped short.

"Yes?" Paul asked.

"That was how he changed my life," she finished.

There was a silence. Mary saw that a struggle was going on in Paul's mind. His eyes were no longer full of condemnation. In a moment he said:

"Forgive me, Mary, if I was hard. I thought you were making excuses for sin."

Mary smiled.

"I know too much about it," she confessed. "I try to look my sins straight in the face, but I don't like other people to do it for me. I am sorry I got hurt and was angry. I came in to ask about your revelation. Peter said you would tell me."

"It was given to me to tell," Paul replied.

"Then you did see Jesus? I want to know all about it. Begin at the beginning and tell me everything."

Mary sat down near the window leaning her back against the wall, and Paul sat facing her, the light on his face.

It was a strong face, she saw, full of vitality and passion and will. The hairs in the bushy eyebrows that met above his big nose were coarse and thick. (I could almost count them. You'd think he'd only one eyebrow, she thought.)

"Jesus changed my life too." Paul paused. "Perhaps not in the same way," he added.

"Never mind the way," Mary interrupted. "Of course you weren't a sinner, and I was. Go on."

"I was on my way to Damascus. I had been in Jerusalem."

"But you had heard of Jesus before then? What had you heard?" Mary interrupted again.

"I heard that he taught that salvation was not to be had by mere obedience to the Law. I heard of his friendship with . . . with . . ."

"With such as me?" Mary put in.

Paul nodded, and went on quickly:

"I thought he was only another fanatic preaching against the Priests and the Temple. I asked myself how he could be holy if he went about with . . ." Paul looked quickly at Mary, and she said:

"You needn't say it again. Go on about Jesus."

(Is he always thinking of sin? she thought.)

"I hated him," Paul declared frankly. "I wanted to stamp his teaching out at any cost. You see, Mary, I had spent my youth in study, and I was proud of my knowledge. How could an ignorant carpenter from Galilee know more of the mind of God than I did? For though I had been born under a curse . . ."

Paul glanced down at his crooked legs.

"Were you always like that?" Mary asked. Paul nodded.

"From my birth. I have always been cut off from other men. In Tarsus the Greeks love and care for their bodies. They say that deformity is discord. A crooked limb is a horror to them. While as for the Jews . . ."

"I know. I always thought it shameful," Mary said.

"They often reminded my father that deformity is a judgment on sin."

Paul stopped short.

"Was your father fond of you?" Mary asked. Then, seeing a shadow come over Paul's face, she added hastily: "Don't talk about it if it hurts. Is he alive?"

"Why should I not tell you of it? It is kind of you to

care whether I have a father or not. Yes, he is living still."

Paul broke off, frowning. The heavy furrows on either side of his big nose seemed to deepen.

But in a moment he went on again :

"I was a lonely child. My sister is older than I. My mother died when I was a boy. I was ugly and deformed with a curse upon me. My father never looked at me without a question in his eyes . . ."

"Which did sin, this child or his parents? It is a cruel question," Mary put in.

"My father never questioned its justice." There was bitterness in Paul's voice. "Nor did I when I was a child. Afterwards, as I grew older, I felt there must be a way out. My whole soul was set on gaining forgiveness for the unknown sin that had crippled me . . . for the sin that had brought death. . . . I wanted salvation. . . . It was not all for myself, Mary."

There was a note of appeal in Paul's voice.

"Of course it wasn't! You are not that sort," Mary responded warmly.

(That's the part of him that Peter would understand. If he ever let him see it, she thought.)

"Tarsus, you know, is full of Gentiles," Paul told her. "Greeks and Romans, Cretans, Arabians, Egyptians and Africans. My father traded with them all. He belongs to one of the chief families of our nation. But I will not tell you about that now. . . ."

"No. Tell me about the foreigners you wanted to save," Mary said.

Paul looked at her. (Does he see me at all? Is his mind not too full? she thought.) Then he went on speaking:

"All the philosophies in the world are debated in our city, either by travelling lecturers or by our own professors in the University. But no pagan philosophy offers men salvation. And even for Jews . . . what is salvation for one man here and there in a world full of sinners? I felt God was greater than that. I studied the Law. I obeyed, not half-heartedly, but passionately, for by obedience we might gain God's forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. I began to believe, as many of our Rabbis do, that if the Gentiles would turn to Judaism God would grant them a share in the promises. So I became a missionary to them."

"Was your father glad?" Mary asked.

(His father doesn't love him. Something is wrong between them, she thought.)

"Yes. He has always supported our missions to convert the Empire. He is angry with me now, but if I can explain what happened, he may understand and forgive."

"What did happen, Paul?"

For a moment Paul made no reply.

(No, he doesn't see me. He is seeing the past, Mary thought.) Then he asked:

"Have you ever been out of your own country, Mary?"

Mary shook her head, and Paul, his eyes lighting up, went on rapidly:

"If I could show you the lake below Tarsus and the Arsenal, and the docks where the foreign boats moor . . .

if you could see the strange sailors and the goods they handle and hear the uncouth tongues they speak you would know what happened. How can these men, ignorant of our customs and not speaking our language, accept our Law? Can educated Greeks who have never heard of Moses understand that to live by his rules means salvation?"

"Did you give up trying to save them, Paul?"

"No, Mary; but my mind was full of doubt. What had I to offer them? A salvation which it was impossible for them to accept. . . . It was then that I first heard of Jesus. Every man I met seemed to talk of him. I was angry. I thought that his teaching would take our one hope of salvation from us. I was afraid, Mary, for in my heart I no longer believed that the Law could save us. I was glad when I heard that Jesus had been crucified. When I was told that he had been seen after his death I refused to believe." Paul paused.

"And then?" Mary asked.

"I saw Stephen die. It was not all my fault. I had gone up to Jerusalem full of fury against the followers of Jesus, but the people were angry already when I spoke against his teaching. I did not mean them to kill Stephen. But the mob broke loose and stoned him . . ." He stopped. Mary turned her eyes away from his face.

Soon Paul began again :

"He died without a curse on his lips. And when I saw him hurled from the cliff . . . his body broken by the stones . . . an agony came upon me. I had lost God

and I knew I must find Him or perish. And so I went down to Damascus."

He put up one hand to cover his eyes.

"It is as real now as it was then . . . the dusty road stretching into the distance and the men who travelled with me tired and dusty too. And I . . . ? How can I tell you? Between one step and the next the world changed. I seemed to walk straight into a flame of brilliant colours that burnt the falseness out of me. I was still in this world, but I had walked into another. A voice spoke to me. I think it was Jesus . . ."

Paul ceased speaking. Mary saw that he was profoundly moved and indeed she was too. She said nothing. She must give him time to recover himself.

In a few moments Paul took his hand from his eyes.

"I knew I was being told something, I did not know what. A message was given, but I was to read it at leisure. I was to wait and it would be made clear to me. . . . After that I went into Arabia. And in Arabia I saw the meaning . . ." He stopped again.

Mary nodded.

"Peter told me. Your plan of salvation," she said.

Paul's expression changed. He glanced keenly at her.

"God's plan," he rejoined sharply.

Mary was taken aback. She could not reply. She could only stare at Paul.

(I ought to have known that Peter's name would upset him. But it is no good apologising now. I may as well go on, she thought.)

"That is the part Peter didn't understand," she said aloud.

"Whether Peter understands or not, it is the message I have been told to proclaim to all the world."

Paul's face was stern. He seemed to have thrown emotion and memory behind him.

(He's just an ordinary man again. He was like an angel, Mary thought.)

She sighed. Then she said:

"And you will make it known, Paul. You couldn't do anything by halves. Whatever you do the whole of you does. But . . ." She hesitated.

"But what?" Paul demanded.

"It's a pity you and Peter dislike one another," she went on with a rush. "If you dislike people you never understand them or their ideas."

"I was not aware that I disliked Peter or misunderstood his ideas," Paul said.

"Perhaps that's why you confuse him," Mary replied meditatively.

"Do I confuse him? I did not know it." Paul's voice was cold and Mary saw his eyes harden.

(He's trying not to be angry, she thought.)

"You confuse me too," she told him.

For a moment or two their eyes met as if they measured one another, and then Paul shrugged his shoulders.

"My mind is a blank," he said. His voice had the courtesy of courts and far-away palaces, and Mary answered:

"Don't snub me, Paul."

"I never snub," Paul replied.

"No. Snub is the wrong word," Mary apologised. "You are always polite, but don't you know it is sometimes more rude to be polite than it is to be rude? I meant don't be superior, and assume that I am too stupid to say what I mean."

"I assumed nothing of the kind!" Paul said hotly. "I do not understand why I confuse you. It may not be all my fault. Perhaps you and Peter do not realise how strictly the mind must be trained before it can grasp spiritual truth."

Mary regarded him carefully.

"Can spiritual truth ever be proved to the mind?" she asked.

"Of course it can," Paul asserted. "What use is my mind if I cannot explain my revelation by it? I must interpret its meaning with my brain."

Mary nodded. Then she said:

"That is just what I want to get at . . . the interpretation of meanings."

"If there is anything I can explain I shall be glad to do so."

Paul's voice was still cold and courteous, and Mary smiled.

(But, all the same, he frightens me! she thought.)

"I think it is something I want to explain to you, Paul," she said.

Paul looked at her, and she added hastily:

"There are some things which I think Peter and James and I understand, and you don't."

"What things?" Paul asked abruptly.

"The Kingdom of Heaven . . . for one," Mary replied.

Paul was astonished.

"Am I not a Jew? What can you have to tell me of the Kingdom of Heaven that I do not know?" he demanded.

"Everything," Mary declared.

Paul opened his lips, but shut them again at once, and Mary said:

"No, Paul. You don't really understand."

"Why do you always answer what I have not said?" he asked.

"It is a tiresome trick but I can't help it," Mary admitted. "Sometimes I think I see what is in people's minds before they say it."

Paul's heavy brows lifted slightly but he did not speak.

"You *are* snubbing me," Mary cried out impulsively. "You are bullying me as you do Peter, and I won't let you. Peter is struggling to remember a blessed time, when he lived in an atmosphere that now he tries to convey to you, who have never lived in it. He can't do it, and it is growing dim to him. Soon he will lose it outright. I won't have that happen to me."

"God is my witness that I was not trying to bully either of you," Paul affirmed, much startled.

"Thank you," Mary said. "Then will you be kind and

let me explain in my own way? You will need patience."

"I will be as patient as I can," Paul replied.

Mary was conscious that under his bent brows he was again scrutinising her sharply, but this time she met his gaze calmly.

(His eyes shine like a goat's . . . looking out of a dark cavern, she thought.)

"I'm not afraid of you now," she said.

"You are a strange woman, Mary." Paul spoke at last.

"No, Paul. Not strange. Only experienced."

"As you like," he agreed.

"I'm not clever, Paul."

"I did not think you were. Few women have any power of reasoning." Paul's reply was so prompt that Mary laughed aloud.

"I was once told by a Greek that anyone who is not deaf and dumb ought to be able to explain what he thinks about everything. So shall we go back to my explanation? . . . Has Peter told you of what Jesus taught us?" she asked abruptly.

Paul shrugged his shoulders.

"He has talked of a kingdom, as you have. He spoke, I think, of being kind to the poor. Of course I wish to remember the poor. We can raise money. Antioch is full of rich men . . ."

Mary cut him short.

"You have got it all wrong, Paul. What have riches or poverty to do with the Kingdom of Heaven? Peter knows better than that."

"What can Peter know of a day that has not yet come?" Paul's dissent was swift and emphatic.

"I said the Kingdom of Heaven, Paul," Mary repeated.

"Yes, I know! The day of Christ's coming, when our mortal bodies will become immortal."

Mary shook her head.

"You don't understand. Though I'm not clever, I can see that you are, Paul. But our revelation can't be understood by cleverness only."

"I did not know you had had a revelation," Paul exclaimed, amazed.

"What changed our lives?" Mary asked.

"Oh, that!" Paul hesitated. "I suppose that might be called a revelation. There are revelations and revelations."

"Mine was of the Kingdom of Heaven," Mary said.

"Do you mean that you were snatched up out of the body?" Paul leant forward eagerly, his eyes shining. "That has happened to me. I have been caught up to Paradise . . . into the seventh heaven."

(Now he's the angel again. How quickly he changes! Mary thought.)

She shook her head.

"No, Paul. I have never been caught out of my body, but I have been in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Paul frowned in perplexity.

"How can that be, Mary? Flesh and blood have no share in that kingdom."

"Jesus said we could live in it now if we wanted to," Mary replied.

Paul shook his head.

"You misunderstood, Mary. How could our mortal bodies enter the Kingdom? He meant when he comes again to judge the world. For at the end, if we keep faith, we shall be glorified."

"He meant nothing of the kind, Paul. He said the Kingdom was here and now." Mary spoke emphatically.

"Perhaps you mixed up one teaching with another?" Paul suggested.

"How could I, when I listened daily?" she answered.

Paul opened his lips to reply, but Mary put out a hand to stop him. "Wait a moment. I want to think," she said abruptly.

She sat silent for a moment, leaning forward, with her chin in her hand, and then she suddenly asked:

"Have you ever been in love, Paul?"

"What has that to do with the Kingdom of Heaven?" he remonstrated sternly.

"More than you think," Mary responded.

Paul glanced down at his crooked legs.

"With this body?" he protested bitterly.

"I didn't want an answer," Mary replied quickly. "I only asked because it may help to explain. . . . I mean . . . to call up an idea which I am not clever enough to express."

"I thought you said it could not be understood by mere cleverness?" Paul objected quickly.

"That is true, Paul. But you said I must express it

with what brains I have. I am trying to tell you now that there are some truths that will never be seen by a cold, thinking mind. They can only be realised in a flood of passion."

"I had rather express in five words with my mind than in a thousand with my passions," Paul said curtly.

"You are not being patient, Paul," Mary declared. "You must know that when a man's feelings are deeply stirred he understands things which it was impossible for him to grasp before. Afterwards, if he ceases to feel, he ceases to understand. Then he thinks he was a fool and he gives up the effort to remember and either sneers or drops into worldliness."

"But just as mathematicians train their brains to retain mathematical truth so we must train our minds to keep the illumination. I told you training was necessary," Paul asserted vigorously.

"My mind was never trained, and yet I understood when Jesus talked," Mary said. "But Jesus lived in the Kingdom, so we found it easy to live there, too. Things were real then that before would have been incredible."

"What do you mean by 'lived in the Kingdom' and when you 'see the Kingdom'? Those phrases tell me nothing. Surely you can define it more clearly than that?" Paul's voice was irritated.

"I am doing my best, but you won't listen. You keep interrupting me," Mary cried out, exasperated. "And, anyhow, I can't define. If you define a wonder you destroy it. How can I repeat what Jesus taught unless you want to hear?"

"My life shall answer for it if I meant to anger you, Mary," Paul responded warmly. "I will not say another word. Perhaps I have not been patient. Tell me as you like." And he sat back on the bench prepared to listen.

"You are very generous," Mary acknowledged. She felt ashamed. "I told you I was not clever. I could make you see more easily if I might tell you a story."

"Isn't that rather childish?" Paul asked hastily, and then added as quickly: "No, no! Go on. Tell it in your own way."

"It was the way Jesus taught," Mary replied. "He used to make pictures of the Kingdom. I remember one tale. May I tell that?"

Paul nodded.

"He was trying to explain about the Kingdom of Heaven, and he told us this. There was a certain man, he said, who owned a vineyard and needed labourers to work among the vines. So early one morning he went out into the market-place and found men waiting there to be hired. He told them the wages he would pay, and when they had agreed to his terms, he put them to work in the vineyard. Later on, about nine o'clock, he went out a second time to the market-place, and there were more men standing there idle and he said to them:

" 'Go and work in my vineyard, and you will be paid what is just,' and they went in, too. Again about mid-day the owner of the vineyard saw that there were men still waiting unhired so he gave them work also. At three o'clock he found more men idle in the market-place and he showed them the way to his vineyard, and finally, at

about five o'clock when the day was nearly done, he went out for the last time, and even at that late hour there were men standing about. And he said to them :

“ ‘Why have you been standing all day long doing nothing?’ ”

“And they answered :

“ ‘Because no man has hired us.’ ”

“ ‘You go, too, and work in my vineyard,’ the owner said, and they went.

“Late in the evening he called his steward and said :

“ ‘Bring the labourers and give them their wages. Call those first who came in last, and those last who came in first.’ ”

“And the steward called them all in, and behold, when they were paid, each man received the same sum.”

Paul frowned heavily, his bushy eyebrows wrinkled above his brilliant eyes.

“The meaning is not clear to me,” he said. “It cannot be that for work of different degrees of hardness the same wages ought to be paid. Unless it will be so after death.”

“It has nothing to do with death. Jesus called it a parable of the Kingdom,” Mary explained.

“I don’t understand,” Paul replied. “Christ could not have meant that it is of no importance to pay a fair day’s wages for a fair day’s work, or that our reward is the same no matter what the work.”

“No, no!” Mary cried. “Can’t you understand that you enter the Kingdom the moment you see it, and once

you are inside all its beauty is yours? It has nothing to do with rewards or merits."

"Surely you don't mean that the ungodly and wicked can enter?"

"Of course! I was wicked when I entered," Mary replied.

"But you had repented." Paul cried. "Sinners cannot share in the Kingdom of God. It is only for those who do right. If they persevere until death they will be given immortal life."

"Not at death, Paul, but now, this very moment we can live in eternity. Jesus said he came to give more life. He told us that to live by his rules meant more abundant life. Even people who are old and worn out can have this intense life, just as those who enter the Kingdom in youth have it. That is the meaning of the story."

"If salvation is so easy why should anyone give up the joys of the flesh?" Paul demanded harshly.

"Because the ways of the spirit are more beautiful," Mary replied. Paul shook his head.

"It is too cheap, Mary. God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance, but there must be punishment for the wicked."

There was a moment's pause, and then Mary asked:

"Is it not punishment enough to see beauty which you have missed?" And Paul answered:

"No, Mary. That will never save men from sin."

There was another pause, and then Mary put another question:

"But, Paul, what makes men sin? Is it not desire?"

Who would want to stay outside the Kingdom when inside it is everything that he has ever desired?"

"It is a woman's reasoning," Paul replied, and Mary smiled.

"A crafty advice is often got from a fool," she remarked, but Paul did not smile.

"You are by no means a fool, Mary. But women never face the fact that the body is the root of sin. Those who sin are storing up God's wrath, and must die."

"I never heard Jesus say anything about God's stored-up wrath. He said God met us half-way. It doesn't make it easier to stop sinning if everybody condemns you," Mary protested.

"Of course we were sinners when Christ died for us, and God welcomes the repentant . . ." Paul admitted.

"Jesus meant more than that," Mary interrupted. "In his Kingdom there is no condemnation. Listen. He told us a story about that too. He said there was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father: 'Father, give me now the share of the inheritance that is to come to me.' So the father divided this property between his sons. And the younger one took his share and went away into a far country where he wasted his living with harlots and flute-players. Then there came a famine in that land, and behold, he had spent all that he had. So he began to be in want. And he was forced to hire himself out to a farmer who sent him into the fields to herd pigs. He was so hungry that he longed to eat the beanpods on which the pigs were fed. But no man gave him any. And after a time he said to himself:

“ ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more bread than they can eat, and here am I dying of hunger? I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him: “Father, I have sinned, and am not worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your hired servants.” ’

“So he arose and went. And when he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and had pity on him, and ran to meet him, and threw his arms round his neck and kissed him.

“And the son said :

“ ‘Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against you, and I am not worthy to be your son.’

“His father would not listen but turned to the servants and commanded them to bring a robe and sandals and a ring for his son, and to make a feast so that they could rejoice at his return.

“Now the elder son was working on the farm and as he came home he heard the sound of music and dancing. He asked one of the servants what it meant, and when he heard, he was angry and would not go in to the merry-making. Even when his father came out and begged him to come in he would not.

“ ‘All these years have I served you,’ he said, ‘and you have never given me even a kid to make a feast with my friends, but the moment this son of yours who has wasted your property with prostitutes returns, you kill a fattened calf and give him this great welcome.’

“The father answered :

“ ‘Son, you and I have been always together, and all that I have has been yours. But what could we do but

make merry and rejoice when this brother of yours who was dead has come back to life, when he who was lost has been found?" "

Mary ceased, and Paul said:

"But the younger son had repented of his evil living."

"His father didn't know that when he ran to meet him."

"It would have been unjust to the elder son to give a large gift to his prodigal brother," Paul insisted.

"If the elder son had been in the Kingdom he would have been glad. He would not have wanted a gift," Mary retorted.

Paul shook his head.

"To forgive the unrepentant is to write letters on water," he quoted.

"Pardon breeds repentance," Mary quoted in her turn.

But Paul, she saw, would have none of it.

"You are very sure of your own opinion, Mary," he said emphatically, "but you are wrong. I have said it before and I say it again. Wrath and anger will fall on every human being who persists in wrong-doing. God has prepared great things for those who love Him, but He has also prepared a Day of Wrath when Christ will judge His enemies."

"Jesus will never do that, Paul," Mary cried out indignantly. "He forgave his enemies."

"But he cannot forgive the enemies of God," Paul declared, and Mary threw up her hands in despair.

"You don't even begin to understand, Paul. It is the secret of life and I can't make you see it. God has no

enemies. Jesus told us to be like him . . . kind to the thankless and the bad. He said we were not to judge . . . we were not even to resist evil."

"If we don't resist evil Satan will take advantage of us," Paul exclaimed hastily.

"Jesus never said that! He told us that if anyone wanted to take our coat from us we were to offer our cloak also. . . ."

"He could not have meant what you think." Paul's voice was angry. "It would be an encouragement to thieves everywhere. No human Government could survive such an interpretation of the teaching."

"If we did as he said we might not need Governments," Mary reflected.

"But that is absurd!" Paul burst out impatiently.

"Not so absurd as you think," Mary interrupted in her turn. "There was another thing he said. Listen, Paul. Perhaps you will explain it away, too. No man ever born, he told us, was greater than John the Baptist, and yet the lowest in the Kingdom was greater than he, for John and other men using force were taking the Kingdom by violence . . ."

"But that is quite easy," Paul broke in. "He meant that by energy and strength men take the Kingdom by storm."

"Wait a moment, Paul. I hadn't finished," Mary insisted. "Might he not have meant that violence and punishment are wrong ways for Governments to rule, just as they are wrong for us? 'See!' he may have said, 'men have always tried to take even the Kingdom by

force, and look what they have made of the world?' If freedom only comes by the inner way, Paul, and you fight for it by the outer way, using violence, what can you gain but fresh chains?"

Paul did not answer, and Mary glanced at him quickly.

"You don't agree?" she asked, and he shook his head.

"Rulers must punish," he said, "and as for us, we must try to live peaceably with everyone. If we cannot do that we must not avenge ourselves. But we stand back to make way for the wrath of God."

"There you are again, Paul, talking of the wrath of God. I tell you there is no wrath. Perhaps you are too clever to understand a thing so simple!" Mary felt she was getting impatient. "You judge everything by the intellect," she said, "but the power to feel is greater than the power to think. No! no! Paul, I will speak. You are head and shoulders above me in intelligence but you don't understand. Jesus said that when you love God with all you heart and your neighbour as much as you love yourself then you are in the Kingdom. You love God, Paul, but do you love your neighbour? It doesn't seem to hurt you to condemn him!"

"Have I not told you how it hurt until I found a way of salvation?" Paul began passionately, but Mary refused to hear.

"You didn't love me, Paul. Before you had even seen me you judged me. When I told you my name, your first instinct was to condemn. You looked in your mind for the picture of a harlot that was there already, and you condemned me by that."

"Not you, but your sin," Paul broke in.

"How can you separate the sinner from his sin if you condemn both off-hand? And how can you love if you are judging? Jesus never did that. His first instinct was to understand . . . to know what was in your mind and what had made you sin. He looked beyond the sin to the passion which caused it. That may be beautiful."

"No passion can be beautiful that leads to sin. I am not saying this to condemn you, Mary, but because it is true," Paul began hotly.

Mary would not let him finish.

"Perhaps I know more about passion than you do, Paul. It is not always sin. It is not always lust. It is more often a flame burning and beautiful, like the love God has for us . . . a door through which we see into the heart of life. Jesus said the test of us all was how much we loved. And his kingdom is not in the future, as you say, but here close to us. It is by love, not righteousness, that we enter."

"That is dangerous doctrine, Mary," Paul said sternly.

"It is not a safe world, Paul. There is danger in breathing but we don't give it up because of that. Jesus was not afraid. He had courage to love us as we are, because he knew what we might be. He saw us as we see ourselves. The glamour we all weave round us gave him pleasure."

Paul could contain himself no longer.

"I appeal to you, Mary, could such a delusion give

pleasure to the Christ?" he cried out. And Mary looked curiously at him before she said:

"It is not delusion but truth, Paul. Who can know the shape your character ought to be as well as you do yourself? Jesus was never deceived. Someone once said that he looked right through the masks of men. That was true. But he never hurt by tearing off the mask. He left you to find out your own faults. He trusted you to cure them. We all know our good qualities better than we do our bad ones. If we didn't we'd give up hope. But we all feel that the good is the real part of us."

"I don't," Paul interrupted.

"Oh, yes, you do!" Mary said tartly. "Only you feel you are good because you say that you are a sinner. The rest of us don't pride ourselves on that."

"Are you trying now to see me as I see myself?" Paul asked ironically.

Mary looked at him. Then she smiled.

"I beg your pardon," she said. "But don't you see, Paul, that you are just like us all? You want to be trusted, too. Sometimes I think that the only thing that matters in life is friendship. How can we make that good if we destroy the glamour which even the base wrap round themselves?"

Paul shook his head again.

"No, no, Mary! You forget our friendship with God."

"Isn't that part of our other friendships? Jesus didn't separate them," Mary exclaimed.

"We cannot love God's enemies. Life is not so simple as you think," Paul objected.

"Jesus made it so," she persisted.

Paul did not answer, and after a moment's silence Mary said:

"I've failed I see. I can't interpret. Jesus would have made you understand but I have come up against a wall in your mind which I can't climb over."

"There is no wall in my mind," Paul replied, much hurt. "But I was certainly thinking that you have not true insight. God hates sin and what God hates men must hate and punish too. How could Christ mean us to tolerate the base and worthless? No, Mary! These are imaginations of your own. You are arguing against God."

"I am doing nothing of the kind, Paul. I am arguing against you. But your mind is so full of your own ideas that there's no room to consider any others! I wish you'd empty it!"

"To take in your ideas? But that is nonsense. If my mind took in every fancy I heard, what room would there be in it for the new revelation? There must be one true doctrine." Paul spoke roughly, and Mary answered quickly.

"I never heard Jesus speak of doctrine."

"Did he not claim to be Messiah?" Paul asked harshly.

Mary looked at him for a moment, and his face, with its big nose and its dominating expression, grew misty. She tried to recall the face of Jesus. His eyes had been serene. He sometimes made fun of you, but he had never dominated. Gay, and serene and certain he lived, assuredly he lived, by laws of which other men were ignorant.

"Claim?" She turned the word over in her mind. "How can the highest claim? People said things about him, and he let them say. What he taught and what they imagined he taught were two different things. He told us that God made the beauty of the world and spoke to us through it. He said that the happenings in our lives are God's messengers, great and small, each one in its degree a revelation of Him. He never said that God spoke to us through a trumpet. He said His voice was still and small, and that if we would grow we must listen for it. The stars made no noise, Paul."

Paul sat silent for a moment, and then he said:

"If the revelation is as simple as that what need was there for Christ to die?"

"There wasn't any," Mary replied.

"There must be a reason for all God's actions," Paul declared.

"Was this God's action?" Mary demanded. "Don't low men always hate and kill what is bigger than they? Jesus opened doors into beauty. He said that to keep our vision we must live by his rules. But his way of life was too high and hard and simple for men. So they killed him."

But if Christ has not paid the penalty for us, we are still in our sins!" Paul exclaimed.

"I expect we are," Mary replied.

"But he died to save us! By his death he took our sins on himself. If we believe this we are freed," Paul affirmed emphatically.

Mary shook her head.

"To go on sinning, Paul?"

"Certainly not. If we belong to Christ we have already crucified our earthly nature."

"It's too complicated for me, Paul," Mary sighed.

"It's not in the least complicated," Paul declared. "A man can now reap good if he sows it. The sin we were born with has been atoned for. A new life has begun. We have only to have faith. . . ."

"What do you mean by faith?" Mary asked curiously. "Just belief in the goodness of God?"

Paul's heavy brows lowered across his eyes in thought. "I mean more than that, Mary. In His revelation of truth."

Mary leant forward eagerly.

"Your truth or my truth, Paul?" she asked.

"How can there be two truths? I mean the Gospel that was revealed to me. God spoke to me in my heart . . . as He speaks to every man."

"Yes, but is He responsible for what you tell the next man about it?" Mary interposed swiftly.

Paul stared.

"You surely do not mean that truth is different to each man?"

Mary nodded.

"There could be no religion if that were true. We must all be of one mind and one opinion," Paul said severely.

"But, Paul," Mary objected, "opinions are many. Religion is one. When you are close to God reasonings about Him drop away. What have opinions to do with

it? . . . If you knew the number of men I have heard talk, each trying to prove that his creed alone was right! The more men talk the farther they seem from God."

"The sort of men you knew . . ." Paul said sharply, and stopped short.

"They were not all bad men. They didn't understand," Mary put in quickly. "Nor did I . . . then," she added.

Paul did not reply. His eyes were on the ground.

"But that has nothing to do with what I was going to say," Mary went on swiftly. Then she looked at Paul. "I'm not hurt, Paul. You didn't mean to hurt me. Only you can never forget my sins, can you? . . . What I wanted to say was that when you love your neighbour, you listen to what he thinks, and try to think it with him. Jesus did that, and he was wiser than any of us. . . . He was one of the men I knew, Paul."

Paul raised his eyes and met her observing look. There was apology and understanding and kindness in his own.

"I ought not to have spoken so hastily, Mary. . . . I am not without knowledge, but it seems to have bred conceit in me. Perhaps I do think too much of sin. Can-not we come to an understanding?" There was great friendliness in Paul's voice, and Mary responded at once.

"If you had known Jesus you would have needed no explanation."

"I may understand more than you think," Paul said smiling and Mary answered.

"I am sorry I've been so stupid."

"And I'm sorry if I've been too clever," Paul retorted grimly.

"Let's stop talking about cleverness," Mary rejoined swiftly, "I want to ask you something. Tell me, Paul, for I am ignorant. There are such things as words of power, are there not?"

Paul looked hard at her.

"Of course. Every initiate knows that."

"Then words which open the doors of the imagination must be powerful? Words which make you remember?"

"It is not the usual meaning, Mary," Paul explained, smiling.

"Never mind the usual," Mary said eagerly. "Listen! Does the word romance mean anything to you?"

Paul shook his head.

"Then wonder and adventure and strength?"

Paul searched his mind for a moment before he replied.

"Wonder, yes. And adventure. Strength, too."

"Humility and reverence and wisdom?" Mary went on rapidly.

"Those are great words," Paul said.

"And joy? You see . . . 'I am furnished with numberless words of might' . . . but they all suggest the Kingdom."

Paul's eyes, she saw, were still full of kindness but he again shook his head.

"The Kingdom of God is not based on words, but on His power," he said.

"Yes, Paul, but Jesus said the power was in us too. The Kingdom is God's, but He leaves it to us to make it real."

"I think Christ spoke of what does not yet exist as if it did," Paul said.

"No, Paul. It is here and now, or nowhere."

"Perhaps when he comes again," Paul began, but Mary interrupted him:

"No, no, Paul! By our dreams we make the world. Every impossible thing is possible. Once you see that you find the Kingdom everywhere, even in the air you breathe."

Paul smiled at her.

"I will try to understand," he said.

Mary watched him.

His head was bent and his brows knit. His eyes seemed to have sunk right into his head.

(Will he ever take it in? Won't he always go back into his own mind? What's the good of talking? she thought.)

Suddenly Paul raised his head.

"It is a kingdom of the spirit?" he asked.

Mary nodded.

"Not in any place? Then it is a state of mind?"

"Yes. Within us," Mary said, and drew a long breath. Was he going to understand?

Paul opened his lips to speak. There was a sound of steps outside. He turned his head to listen, and shut his lips again as the door swung open and Peter came in. Mary and Paul both turned to him. He looked from one

to the other. For a moment nobody spoke. Then Mary said:

“Paul and I have been fighting for hours. We were just beginning to agree.”

“Oh, were you?” Peter replied. And abruptly the talk ended.

VIII

WHEN Mary went away, Peter walked with her. She knew that he wanted to find out what she thought of Paul, but she was tired, and did not wish to talk. They walked in silence for some distance, then, as she still did not speak, Peter began :

"Well, Mary, what do you make of him? You seemed very friendly."

Mary thought for a moment, and then she answered :

"He's a great man, Peter."

Peter was startled.

"What makes you think that, Mary?" he asked.

"Look at him, Peter, with his weak body and blazing eyes. He has a great heart."

"If he has it's led astray by his head. He told you of his plan?" Peter inquired.

"He told me how it came to him," Mary replied.

"He's full of Greek notions." Peter spoke bitterly. "James says I mustn't say he isn't a good Jew, but he isn't. He wants to change the Law as Jesus never did. Who is Paul, that he should try to do what Jesus didn't?"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Peter! You are not trying to understand him," Mary said sharply.

"Perhaps not, Mary. But if he believes that the Law

was revealed by God, why does he want to throw it over?"

"On account of the Gentiles, Peter," Mary explained.

"But, Mary, he thinks the Kingdom is an old-fashioned idea," Peter remonstrated.

"So it was, Peter, until Jesus made it new," Mary replied.

"Jesus was a good Jew," Peter, worried, objected.

"Wasn't he something more?" Mary asked.

Peter hesitated. "Paul says he is a great spirit."

"That's not new," Mary retorted. "Didn't he teach that we are all spirits in bodies, children of one Father?"

"Paul doesn't seem to understand it as we do, Mary. He seems to think Jesus was a God and became a man . . . or God made him one. Paul hasn't got our way of thinking. He doesn't live in Judea."

"We made our mistakes, too, Peter," Mary reminded him.

"We may have thought that Messiah would be an earthly king, Mary, but we learnt better afterwards. And now Paul comes along and upsets us again."

"What does it matter, Peter? Jerusalem is always boiling over with talk about God and the nature of God."

"But there must be truth somewhere, Mary."

"Of course there is, Peter, but we are not big enough to understand it," Mary rejoined.

"Paul says that Gentiles can never become Jews," Peter went on in his worried voice, and Mary answered promptly:

"Well, he ought to know more about them than we do. He has lived his life amongst them."

"He wants to drive everybody before him. They raced after Jesus, but they'll never race after Paul," Peter said gloomily.

"You are wrong, Peter. He has got power in him. He's never known the love of woman or child, and his brain's on fire. So he'll move the world."

"He'll never move it as Jesus did," Peter maintained doggedly.

"How could he?" Mary agreed. "It's a different thing altogether. What was moving the world to Jesus? He saw beyond all that. But Paul will make men think."

"He does nothing but think," Peter said irritably. "Jesus never thought the worse of a man if he was stupid, but that's what Paul will always do."

"Perhaps so, Peter. But he will not know that he is doing it," Mary replied.

"What will that matter when he has upset the whole world?" Peter cried out passionately.

"He won't do that, Peter. The world is not so easily upset," Mary assured him.

Peter sighed heavily.

"He pays no heed to anything we say. He thinks he can make all men believe this new doctrine," he said.

"Why not let him try?" Mary asked.

"But, Mary," Peter expostulated, "the Law has come down to us through generations. Jesus didn't change it, and why should we let Paul begin?"

They had come to the courtyard of the house where Mary was staying. They passed in through the gateway. It was the hour of the midday meal, and the city lay silent

around them. Mary stopped before the closed house door and lifted the latch. Then she turned to Peter and said :

“Jesus rested somewhere beyond where our thought can reach. Did he not tell us that it is not by our brains we learn that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us? He knows that men’s minds move here and there and never settle anywhere, but he found that out at the end of his thinking, and Paul’s only at the beginning of his. Jesus had the secret of life, but Paul’s not found it yet. Why not let him be? Who are we to know the purpose of God?”

She put her hand on Peter’s breast and said :

“Good-bye, Peter dear. Don’t trouble. Paul’s a great man. He’ll never be content with Judea. He’s sure to go back to his Gentiles.”

Then she pushed open the door and went into the house.

IX

PAUL returned to Syria, after his two weeks with Peter, as he had gone to Jerusalem, by road. He took back a multitude of new impressions and all the way from the grey uplands of Judea to the divided waters of Antioch he sorted them out. They were not in the least like the imaginations he had made before he had gone to Jerusalem, but, then, nothing in life ever happened as you expected it to happen. Nothing ever would. Sometimes the reality was greater. Sometimes it was meaner. In this case it was meaner. Peter and James were not as great as he had hoped they would be. They had not understood.

Of course, Peter was stupid. He was not an educated man. Barnabas had told Paul something of his history. Peter had been a traitor. Only for a time, it was true, but long enough to prove his cowardice. Judas had been a traitor, too, but he had killed himself for it. Peter had not had courage for that. He had repented, but his repentance had not taught him humility. He had argued with as much vehemence against Paul as if he had never denied the Christ. Once or twice he had lost his temper. There was no doubt he was unstable and weak. James was older and wiser, but he, too, like Peter, was uncultivated. They

were both little better than peasants. They owed their prestige to their association with Jesus. Apart from that they were merely old-fashioned, ill-trained Jews who had never realised the limitations of the Law and who knew nothing of the diversities of men's minds. They lacked the experience which every exiled Jew had of balancing, in the midst of cosmopolitan cities, the rival claims of Judaistic and pagan teachings. They had never doubted that the Jews were right, and as they had always lived with people who had the same point of view, and were as ignorant as they of the great world outside Judaism, they had become set in their own opinions and were now entirely without sympathy for new ideas.

Paul was glad to get away from Jerusalem. It was a back-water. Fortunately the Romans brought a breath of fresh air into it. They had introduced some modern ways, though they found Judea the most difficult of the provinces to govern. If the Jerusalem Jews had governed Judea all life there would have moved in sluggish, torpid changelessness. They refused to accommodate themselves to modern conditions. They fought fiercely against anything which offended their racial pride, and how their narrow patriotism made them hate their co-religionists in Syria and Cilicia, whose minds were more adaptable!

Peter and James had this same pinched outlook. The way they had spoken of Messiah was enough in itself to prove them provincials. They had talked of Jesus . . . who had existed as a Divine being before his incarnation . . . as if that brief episode of life in a body were everything. They had actually walked and talked with

Divinity and yet so far forgot it that they spoke with easy familiarity of the details of the daily life of Jesus! They did not realise that to speak of Jesus as a man destroyed the glory of his coming and cheapened the worth of his sacrifice. A good Jew, Peter had said. A good Jew! This of the Son of the Most High God, Creator of every nation on earth!

Paul could not feel that the misunderstanding was his fault. He had tried to make them see. Perhaps he had expected too much from Peter? Stupid men never realised significations that clever men grasped at once. Peter had followed Jesus. He had accepted him as Messiah. It ought to have been easy to make him grasp the fact that the Messiah of the Jews was also the Saviour of the Gentiles and the Son of the Most High God. But Peter and James, proud of their earthly association with Jesus, forgot his glory and power, and ignored his future judgment of the world. They always slipped back to simple memories, simple things, simple sayings and simple though kindly acts. And yet they were obsessed with this idea of a Kingdom! A Kingdom on earth, too, existing here and now, and not when the Christ came again to rule over the world. Even Mary had talked of the Kingdom.

Mary was beautiful. There had been a time in Paul's life when that would have mattered . . . when her beauty might have swept him away. Passion had sometimes seized him, but he had flung himself on it and strangled it. But for his crooked legs and his love of God, his body might have dominated over his soul. He had fought and conquered passion. He could look at a woman

now without his imagination once stirring. . . . Women were not soul-less, as some men said. Their souls had value, and their sympathy too. A man's best friends might well be women. Mary was more cultivated than other women. She owed that to her pagan paramours. . . . She had repented. . . . She was not like the harlots of the market-place, always asserting herself. She made the great impression that one does who makes no effort to produce an impression.

For a moment she had almost convinced him that there might be something in her ideas. But what could a woman, even a harlot who had seen many men and many cities, know? The Kingdom of Heaven was a dangerous doctrine to preach in a Roman world. The authorities would always suspect another attempt to establish a theocracy like that ill-fated effort of Judas the Gaulinite. The Emperor would soon wipe out any movement that aimed at returning power into the hands of Jewish and disaffected priests. . . . But Mary could not have meant that. He must be fair. . . .

She might be right in thinking that you could find God in a great love for a human being, but such love was nothing to the love men ought to feel for God. The relationship with God had nothing to do with your friendship with men. It was a thing in itself, built up of a thousand intimate associations . . . learning to understand what He wanted with you . . . what He meant by events. Mary put the stress on the human side. She mixed up both relationships as, indeed, they all did. Could it be that she had seen something to which he, more dense,

had been blind? Paul was worried. At the back of his mind an idea seemed to float. He tried to catch and define it, but it evaded him. Was it an idea or an impression? He could just perceive it dimly.

Mary had failed to persuade him that her interpretation of the teaching of Jesus was right, but was she, in truth, trying to express an experience which he had never had? Had they all had this? How could they have had something that he had missed? . . . Mary's description of Jesus had made an impression deeper than that given by Peter and James. It was not that she refused to think of Jesus as a Great Spirit. . . . No, it was something that lay behind her talk . . . a haunting impression . . . of what? How could Mary know more of the mind of Jesus than Peter and James, his most intimate men friends, did? Even the cleverest women jumped to conclusions. . . . They had only known Jesus in the body. . . . Mary reasoned like a woman. Her brain was full of wrong notions picked up here and there from men she had known. . . . Not from Peter. His thoughts were too muggy. . . . But though she was cleverer than Peter, she had no more power of clear thinking. . . . How sloppy Peter was! His turban was untidily folded. His beard was ragged. His mind was unprecise.

As Paul recalled one impression after another, it seemed that every now and then another man inside him suddenly asked a question. It was generally an uncomfortable one, and Paul tried to avoid answering it.

"The misunderstanding *was* Peter's fault. I went to

Jerusalem full of love for these possible new friends," he told himself.

"Oh, did you? It's the first I have heard of love. You went to settle your ritual," the other man put in.

"Well, I desired to be friendly," Paul modified his assertion. Then, arguing against himself, he tried to justify his feelings. Peter and James evidently didn't trust him. It was Peter's fault. He was more intolerant than James. They hadn't tried to agree with him. Peter *was* childish, and his mind *was* muggy.

"Oh, stop abusing the creature!" Paul's second self remonstrated.

"But he is a coward and weak," Paul defended himself.

It was odd that the new revelation should have begun in such half-baked minds. But was it? As Mary had said, a fully trained mind would often reject truth that an ignorant one would accept. Had Mary said that? No, Peter had said it. He had said some quite clever things . . . no doubt they were memory . . . picked up from the Christ. It must have been because of their simplicity that the first revelation had been made to them. A sophisticated mind might have criticised. In his own case, how many years of misery had been necessary to break down his intellectual pride? Simple minds had not that agony.

Mary had not seen how lawless her ideas were. They would make morality a matter of time and geography. Every villain in the Empire would take advantage. Such unwordly nonsense meant direct encouragement to sin. It was foolish to read loose meanings into stories Jesus

had told. God hated sin, and what He hated man must hate too. And yet love was the greatest thing in the world. He had learnt that in Arabia. Mary knew it, too. She was obviously living still in a vivid spiritual experience far above bodily sensations. But she forgot ordinary daily life, which, after all, must be lived. Not to resist evil was only her interpretation. She had got it all mixed. Jesus meant that evil was to be conquered by good, and injury not returned by injury. He could not have taught that to create a new heart in men you must love them in their vices. Men must resist evil. Repentance and acknowledgment of sin came before forgiveness.

And yet? Was the impression that Mary had given him only her memory of a personality? Paul still had that sense of something not quite understood . . . that consciousness of a presence haunting, but never seen . . . invisible and yet more moving than the whole visible world. Were these things that you saw out of the tail of your eye imagination, or were they the only things in life that had any permanent value? Peter had made no claim to have a special revelation. Did he know them, too?

"You didn't give Peter much chance to explain," the other man suddenly put in.

"How could I? My mind is stronger than Peter's. My revelation completes and rounds that given by Jesus. Am I to give in to Peter's sloppy notions?" Paul answered hotly.

And then, all at once, he gave up the fight. He might just as well be honest with himself. He had tried to like

Peter and be kind to him. When he had fought and overborne him, and had seen the depression grow in his red-rimmed eyes, he had felt a momentary pity. . . . It was more than depression. It was dismay and bewilderment, helplessness . . . but stubbornness, too. Peter would never give in. There was no good disguising that he had taken a dislike to him at once. The moment he heard Peter's voice he felt annoyed. Queer! He and Peter had hated one another at sight. After all, what was Peter? An ignorant man, affectionate perhaps, and kind but by nature of small count in the world. He was only a peasant and peasants were not trained to control their feelings. He would always blurt everything out. . . .

Paul shook his mind loose. He could not go on thinking of Peter for ever!

What was to be done now? Here he was returning to Antioch with things just as they had been. James and Peter had not realised the true position in Syria, and therefore saw no necessity for a settlement. They refused to face the difficulty squarely. He ought to have forced them, but how could he? They were great men, and he was not of much importance . . . at present. They had not treated him as an equal. It was evident they thought him of small account. Of course all these Jews in Jerusalem would lose their importance if Gentiles were allowed to enter Judaism on equal terms. To-day, even the most cultivated pagan, if he wished to become a Jew, had to accept an inferior position. Only born Jews were the chosen, and Peter and James wanted to make Jesus a purely national and Jewish Deliverer. Their hidden mo-

tives were political, not spiritual. If he had been given an opportunity to explain his case to the other members of the community, he might have gained their support, but Peter and James had not introduced him to any of their friends. At this very moment he was unknown even by sight to the brethren in Judea! All he had done was to introduce himself to James and Peter! At any rate, they knew him now.

They had agreed that Paul, on his return to Syria, was to continue his work with Barnabas. Would they have deprived him of that? He must go to Cilicia also. They knew none of these countries. . . . He had expected to be recognised as one of the leaders of the new religion, but he was returning to Antioch as he had gone, with nothing settled. In plain words, he had been a failure. What would Barnabas say?

Had he wanted prestige and power? . . . Paul challenged the other man in him. . . . No, no! He wanted to save men's souls. The proof of the truth of his revelation was in the growth of his following. If he were wrong, men would not follow him. What would Barnabas say?

The last night of Paul's journey was hot, and he could not sleep. Inside the inn yard the flies and the restless animals and the snoring sleepers under the arches of the balcony made such a disturbance that at last he rose and pulled his bedding outside the yard wall into the open space beyond the inn where he could sit, awake, but alone and in quiet. The moon was full. The country around lay pale blue in the white light, and against one

hill a group of dark trees huddled together stood out in a solid mass like metal. There was no danger of brigands. For miles round every moving object could be clearly seen.

Those hills were Roman now. One after another the Empire had absorbed the provinces of Asia. It was inevitable that soon there would be only one Government in the world. Peter and James had no knowledge of the vast land outside Judea and Galilee. They had not even been as far as Antioch. Peter had been a fisherman, but he had fished in inland waters only. He had never sailed the wide and dangerous seas. With such a limited parochial experience, how could they grasp the conditions under which the new revelation must make its way? Under the just and generous Roman rule, the Jews in Antioch were as free and had as much power as the Greeks or the Romans themselves. They appointed their own Governor, and the synagogue held as many Greeks as Jews. . . . They could all become followers of the Christ. But was it possible to explain to men without either imagination or experience that if the religion of Christ was to grow, it must be built on the altars of the pagans? The crowd of false gods who reigned in Greece and Rome had to be swept away. A way must be made for the new revelation. That petty little sect in a backwater, speaking a language nobody understood but themselves, must give way to bolder men who could explain to the Gentiles that the new faith was as wide and as powerful as the Roman civilisation . . . more adventurous

and strange than the mysteries of the Greeks, and yet as just and disciplined as the moral law of the Jews.

As he sat there looking out over the Syrian hills Paul suddenly realised how far he was from Jerusalem. It was not the distance . . . as distances go . . . the journey between Jerusalem and Antioch was short. But Judaism had vanished. This was the Roman world. . . . He had failed to make Peter and James understand. They had preferred to drift. The hardness and expense of travel would make communication with them difficult. Peter in Judea could never know, except by casual scanty gossip, what they were doing in Antioch. Was Peter, with his parochial outlook, or James, with his just but narrow nature, to be allowed to diminish or destroy the work that Paul and Barnabas, both imperially minded, were doing there?

"Why bother about them? Go your own way," Paul said to himself.

"But no," the other man answered at once. "There must be unity. Rome is the centre of the political Empire. Jerusalem must be the centre of the religious one." Paul and Barnabas could not make themselves chiefs of a separate sect. They would never advise the Antioch community to break with the first followers of Jesus. Peter and James must always be important. Greeks, Jews, Barbarians, Scythians, slaves and free men were all to be of the same household of faith. But could it be done? Paul clenched his fists. Those narrow nationalists in Judea might stop it all!

"They don't believe in me, but I will make them!" Paul

thought. He would not accept their judgment on him. He must make a fight of it. His revelation was not to be smothered. What were Peter's memories of Jesus to the blazing certainty of Paul's vision? Paul closed his eyes. Behind the lids a picture began to form. Before him a long road branched right and left into two long roads. The two long roads ran away on either side far into the distance. There, where he stood at the fork, for half a mile perhaps a traveller on one road could shout across to a comrade on the other. Then the distance spread, wider and wider. Soon any communication would be impossible. Was this the future?

Paul woke up suddenly. His fists were still clenched. In the white moonlight he saw the knuckles white, too, with tension. His fingers were gnarled, the knuckles were like vine branches . . . so were his father's. But he wasn't like his father. He longed for unity. He prayed for unity. Which road led to it? One only led to God and truth. . . . But which? How could the revelation succeed without unity? Paul had forgotten his father. He was walking hard down one fork of the road. The other track was already out of sight. Which path had he taken? Which?

X

PAUL drew a long breath of relief when he saw Antioch again. Here he could be free. As he walked across the four-square market-place on his way to report to Barnabas he felt proud of the city. He admired the colonnade and the great library where the records were kept. The Jews in Antioch, men of the world with wide responsibilities, were ready to accept new ideas, and had no desire to hold themselves aloof from the rest of the world. Barnabas, too, was not in sympathy with a narrow Judaism. Antioch was not home, like Tarsus, but it was as fine a city. Paul had long since ceased to object to the splendidly decorated synagogue. He had spoken so often in it that its glory had ceased to bother him. A synagogue like that marked a distinct break with the austere practice of Jerusalem, and made a link with the pagan world.

Barnabas listened with interest to Paul's account of Jerusalem. He said nothing of failure. He evidently never thought of it. It looked as if, in his heart, he had not expected Paul's visit to have much effect. Its results were not as important to him as they were to Paul.

"Time cures most misunderstandings. It will cure this," Barnabas said.

"And in the meantime shall we baptise or circumcise?" Paul asked.

"We will be guided by circumstances," Barnabas decided, and Paul had to leave it at that. It was true that he was still only an assistant, Barnabas was the chief apostle in Antioch. The responsibility was his.

It was eleven years before Paul saw Peter and James again. During those years he and Barnabas made their headquarters in Antioch, and visited and preached in the great towns of Syria and Cilicia. In each town where even a few followers could be found they established a community which met daily or weekly for worship. The regular breaking of bread together in memory of Jesus was a bond, they taught, which united each believer to God and at the same time tied them to one another. Membership of the new sect gave Gentiles the right of entry to the synagogues of the great Jewish Church in Roman Asia, for though the Law was not imposed on new members, the Christians were looked on as a branch of Judaism. There was little change in this, for God-fearing pagans had always mixed freely with the tolerant Jews of Syria and Asia Minor and attended the Synagogue. Barnabas preached to both Jews and pagans that Jesus had taught that it was not spiritual to insist that worship in any Temple made by man was necessary to salvation. It might help men to live a more spiritual life, but that was all it could do. The ritual sacrifices which, Paul insisted, had been swept away by the one supreme sacrifice of Jesus, Barnabas had not for a long time thought neces-

sary. God might at one time have ordered men to sacrifice their cattle, but it was only to prepare them for the greater sacrifice of offering themselves.

After his experiences in Arabia, Paul knew that he could never again return to a belief in ceremonial law. That possibility was dead. But he still preached the moral law, of which his new revelation was the completion. Hope, he told the pagans, had come with Christ into the world. The spirit could now conquer the flesh. Christ was alive, and his resurrection proved that the new age had begun. It was a manifestation from God to show that the old order was obsolete. It was the beginning of a cosmic change that one day would bring new heavens and a new earth. There was only one way to save the world, and, in spite of Jerusalem, it was the way which had been revealed to Paul. That Kingdom they had talked about. . . . Mary's odd insistence on a way of life that would destroy men's souls. . . . What value had such teaching? They had misunderstood the Christ. He meant that the Kingdom would be established on his return. The inspiration which came to most men when they accepted this doctrine was a proof that Paul was right. It was a seal on the new deed which God had given to men.

Nobody in Jerusalem attempted to interfere with Antioch. From time to time someone came or went between the two cities, but the distance was too great for real supervision. There could be no regular communication with the disciples in Jerusalem. Of course the leaders in Judea had a right to know of the progress of the teaching at

Antioch, and now and then letters were exchanged, but Barnabas and Paul exercised their own judgment in matters of organisation, and the Antioch society took its own way.

As the years passed, the flame of love to all the world in which Paul had lived in Arabia and Damascus died down. That feeling of being at the centre of life faded. Somewhere underground, he felt, his passion was still alive, but he had ceased to live at a white heat. He had lost the emotion which brought vision. But what did that matter, if the work was done? Even with Barnabas, whom he loved, hard thinking and some emotional sternness, too, he told himself, were necessary. Barnabas was lovable, but he was inclined to undervalue clear thinking. Paul still found him sometimes slack, so that if he did hit a nail on the head he often forgot to drive it home. In truth, he was tinged with some of those same ideas that Peter and James, in their odd way, reconciled with Judaism. But, though Barnabas did not accept all Paul's interpretations of the new revelation, on the whole they agreed well enough to be able to work together.

Each year Paul took a more prominent place in the community. Initiative and direction seemed naturally to belong to him. For the sake of his gospel he even pushed himself forward. He was soon Barnabas's equal, and many people considered him as chief. For Paul's mind leapt far beyond Barnabas's compromises. When he saw through the eyes of his imagination the new society which God was shaping, he felt that Barnabas and Peter and James were, all three, blind. For God was making a

community that was something new and unheard of . . . a community that had never existed before, and that staggered the imagination. It was too great for any imagination to grasp. He was inspiring men to found a society of all nations, which, though still in this world, belonged to the heavenly world. Each man and woman, rich or poor, had a place, and each must suffer or rejoice with his neighbours. The rules of this new society were hard. Paul was certain that evil-livers had no part or lot in it. Everyone who agreed to the rules must be accepted. The joy would pay for the discipline. To be a Christian would bring help and a friendship that would last through life and continue beyond death. Thus banded together, they were to fight against sin. Paul had no sympathy with men who left the battle. Even the Essenes, he felt, though undoubtedly religious, had cowardly turned their backs on life. To Paul life was an arena, the scene of a fierce battle between the beast and the spirit. Amongst the Gentiles the beast was triumphant. For what had pagans to help them? Nothing but a few schools of philosophy which trained learned men, and a mass of formless customs which passed for religion amongst the ignorant! If pagans were to be saved, Christians must never seek shelter. They must fight to the end in the open.

Of course there were difficulties. Paul found that, with the odd egotism which made men cling to their own opinions, many Jews who were ready to accept Jesus as Messiah would not agree that by his death the Law had been completed and ended, while Gentiles who held, with Paul, that Jesus was greater than a mere human and Jewish

Deliverer and by his death had bought men the right to live for ever, argued that the sacrifice was useless to them if the Law was still effective, as they could never carry it out, and so could never be saved. Unless this difficulty was settled, Paul pointed out to Barnabas, it would bring them back to where they had been before the death of Jesus: face to face with an uncertain doctrine of salvation which could never unite the world. Barnabas, Paul felt, always evaded the dilemma, but indeed the success of the teaching was at first so great that there was no necessity to face it.

The work was not all triumph, but when there was hardship they took it without grumbling. Sometimes they had disputes with stiff-minded authority: a Roman governor who took a rigid view of his duty, or a timid one afraid of the disturbances caused by new ideas. Sometimes a few narrow-minded Jews, or a pagan community whose members practised their religion and refused others the same right, complained, or a corrupt judge demanded fines which there was no money to pay. Paul and Barnabas had been flogged, imprisoned, driven with ignominy from one or two cities, robbed and spat on. But the work went on. The success of the new society seemed certain.

And then a blow fell on the community, and Barnabas, as Paul had said he would be, was forced to face Paul's problem.

Fourteen years after Paul's conversion some Hebrew Jews came down to Antioch from Jerusalem, and at once began to stir up trouble. They were shocked at the Chris-

tian community in Antioch and said so openly. Pagans were actually mixing on equal terms with Jews. Nobody was insisting that all followers of Jesus must be circumcised. At the weekly breaking of bread circumcised Jews sat in the same room with Gentiles, and ceremonial uncleanness was ignored. No man could be saved, they said, who so neglected the Law. The Christians must carry out the rules of Moses.

Paul was indignant. He had so grown in authority that now he spoke with assurance. The success of his revelation had proved its truth. No doubt, he said privately to Barnabas, the Jerusalem leaders who were still more or less orthodox had heard rumours about Antioch, and had sent these men to spy. Barnabas would not agree to this. Peter and James could not have departed so far from the ways of Jesus as to lose faith in his other friends, he said. But he was annoyed, too, and he and Paul drew together to meet the attack. It was obvious that if the Hebrews went on talking there would be a cleavage in the community, which up to now had agreed with its leaders on the essential doctrine that Christ had died and risen for the salvation of pagans as well as of Jews, and that it was not necessary to make converted Gentiles carry out Jewish rules.

This was pointed out to the agitators. But they persisted in their own opinion, and claimed that they would be supported by the chief apostles in Jerusalem. It was not the first time, they reminded Barnabas, that decent people had been shocked by the levity of the synagogue in Antioch. Rabbis had before now been sent from Jerusa-

lem to inquire into the low level of morals amongst the Jews there. It was one thing to believe that Jesus was Messiah, but quite another, they asserted, to allow laxity with regard to the laws of Moses. They had not expected to find a Levite like Barnabas at the head of a gang of loose-living Gentiles or . . . they turned to Paul . . . to see a Pharisee teaching men to despise the Law.

Barnabas and Paul and the other leaders in Antioch were in a difficulty. They had no power to settle the matter. The community looked beyond them to the authority of the original disciples. That authority lay in Jerusalem, and the spies told the members that Barnabas and Paul had exceeded the authority given them. There was a serious quarrel with the visitors and people began to take sides. Discussion spread. Christian Jews refused to meet Christian pagans. Everybody was upset. A split was imminent when Paul insisted on an appeal to Jerusalem. It was quite time, he told Barnabas, that this difficulty was faced. They had drifted long enough. Antioch could not allow freedom, and Jerusalem insist on bondage. They must have unity.

Barnabas agreed, and the matter was brought before the community. The members with one voice voted that a delegation be sent to the chief Apostles in Jerusalem. Barnabas was chosen as head, and Paul to go with him. Paul was now as well known as Barnabas, except to the Christians in Jerusalem (were they called Christians?), who, he remembered, did not even know what he was like. He could speak to Peter and James as an equal. He decided to take Titus, one of the converted Greeks, with

him. Titus had never been circumcised. He could represent his race, and show the Hebrews what a pagan turned Christian was like. He would be a support to Paul, too. Not that Paul felt helpless. He had grown since his last visit to Jerusalem. It was another and stronger man, he thought, who would leave Antioch with Barnabas.

XI

ON the way to Jerusalem something happened to Barnabas. Paul, defining and arranging his thoughts, was preparing for the discussion which lay before them but Barnabas would not listen. It seemed to Paul that he had lost all interest in the work. He would not speak of salvation any more. He wanted to talk of journeys he had made with Jesus, and things Jesus had said and done. He wanted to point out to Titus, who had never been in Galilee before, roads they had walked on when they were all young men and life lay glorious and gay before them. Impossible things had been possible then.

There was one day when Paul almost quarrelled with them both. They had eaten their luncheon by the side of a dusty track that ran under terraced hills. The loose, light earth was white. A wind stirred in the trees, rustling the pointed leaves of the olives and turning up their silver sides. Titus had lit a small fire and put an iron plate on it, and in a few moments he had baked cakes of bread, which they ate with cheese and dates and honey. It was a pleasant meal, and they talked as they ate.

"I suppose I could have property again if I liked," Barnabas said, and he explained to Titus how the wheat

and barley, grapes and figs, pomegranates and olives had to be reckoned up and a tenth, called the first-fruits, had to be given to the priests.

"As a Levite, I may still have a right to my share," he said.

Paul, listening, was bored. What interest could such Jewish customs have to Titus? Now that the Gentile world had been left behind, was the Jewish calling Barnabas again? But, no! It was only more memories of Jesus. And Titus *was* interested. His thin dark face was alive with his interest as Barnabas, who sat facing south so that he could see the heights round Jerusalem, talked.

"Look at those enchanted mountains!" Barnabas said. Now those very mountains, Paul knew, were stony and rude. They were mostly outcrops of flat rocks pushing up through a thin skin of earth. In some places the rock was naked, where even that sparse soil had been washed away by torrents of rain. It was bad agricultural land, and Paul said so.

"Bread isn't everything!" Barnabas retorted. "The magic lies in colour, which can change even that barren place into beauty," and he told Titus that Jesus had done something like that for people . . . changed the commonplace into wonder and adventure.

"He lived to teach us joy," Barnabas said.

"He died to buy our salvation," Paul put in drily.

"Perhaps joy is salvation," Barnabas retorted.

"It may be so at the end, when he comes again," Paul replied.

"You wouldn't always be so serious if you had known him," Barnabas said. "Sometimes you can only see men's sins, Paul, but he saw everything in them. He said he came to give more life."

"After death," Paul interrupted impetuously.

"No, now!" Barnabas said gaily. "You see," he explained to Titus, "I'm remembering Jesus, and how he said we were not to worry. You lose the sense of wonder if you worry. If you try to save your life, you lose your soul."

"But we must be responsible," Paul broke in.

"Why?" Barnabas asked.

"Because God has left the choice between life and death to us," Paul retorted. He hated this flippant side of Barnabas, just as he hated talk of Jesus as a man.

"Well, if you've made your choice, why can't you be happy?" Barnabas said, and would not listen any more. "It's good to feel gay and irresponsible again," he announced, and, in defiance of Paul, went on to tell Titus about the Kingdom, and of how anybody could enter, but it was easier for the poor to realise it.

"He meant the poor in spirit," Paul interrupted. Titus was his convert. Why should Barnabas teach him? Barnabas wasn't annoyed. He turned to Paul quite gaily.

"Here I do know what I am talking about. I was rich once. I see now that without wealth it is easier to live in the Kingdom, though joy doesn't depend on either wealth or poverty. It's a way of looking at things. Anybody can have that, no matter how destitute. It's like

those bare hills. See! A moment ago they were black, and now that the sun has touched them they are glorious. That's a parable of the Kingdom."

"A man must provide food for his children," Paul objected.

"Yes. But why fuss? Give God a chance to help." Barnabas was getting reckless.

"The rich cannot enter the Kingdom because they want to bring too much in with them," he said. "No rich man is care-free. He has to manage. He has no time to live. And he is afraid. Fear comes from riches . . . fear of not having enough . . . fear of being cheated . . . fear, even, of not being able to give enough. Fear cannot enter the Kingdom."

"Even poor men are not always care-free," Paul said ironically, and at that Barnabas became serious.

"It's true," he answered. "But Jesus, when hunger tempted him, said men don't live by bread alone. . . . We are ignorant of everything beyond our experience, so we can't know the meaning that lies behind life. Jesus knew. If you believe in God, you mustn't worry, he said, even about your children's food. Worry is like clouds covering the hills. God may be watching and helping, but worry hides that from us. But then . . . Jesus believed in God. He trusted His care for us, and he said if we did as he did we'd find out if his theories were true. Why don't you try, Paul?"

Barnabas had gone back to gaiety. He was teasing Paul, and Paul didn't like to be made fun of.

"I am not a rich man, Barnabas," he said.

"I meant your brains, Paul. Mental riches keep men out of the Kingdom, too."

Paul was hurt. Perhaps Barnabas saw it, for his voice changed.

"You'd be happier if you didn't fuss so much about sin. You forget that God is good to the thankless and the bad, and makes the sun rise on evil as well as good," he said.

Paul sighed. It was that same old misunderstanding again. He was tired of it.

"I shall never agree that the Christ took life lightly," he replied coldly, and Barnabas rejoined:

"You never knew him. Why, people said he evaded every duty in life! That wasn't true, of course. His duty was to teach. To him the vision of God was the real world. He who marvels reigns, he said. If we fuss, we lose the power to wonder. Then the real world fades away and the unreal seems real. After that a man can't feel truth any more. He can only talk about it."

"Like me?" Paul asked bitterly.

"No, no, Paul! Not in the least like you! But you might try to be serene, as Jesus was."

"Jesus was God's son," Paul retorted.

"Then why don't you do as he told us?" Barnabas exclaimed. And at that Paul was angry.

"I can get into the seventh heaven, too, if I like," he cried. "But I gave it up to preach my gospel. I gave up joy and delight. I once thought nothing else worth while but that heaven . . . a place packed with interest and delight, full of adventure and friendship. I came out of it

to lead a drab, dull life . . . to exhort dull, drab people to change their lives. I teach them of the immortal life they so greedily desire. By sheer force and energy I push men out of their aimless existences. And you tell me I don't do as Jesus commanded!"

Paul turned away from Barnabas and Titus and the others. He climbed the wall that held up one of the terraces, and walked away under the olives. After a moment's silence, Barnabas and Titus followed him. Under the old gnarled trees Paul turned to face them.

"Why should you give it up, Paul?" Barnabas asked.

"How can I keep it and work?" Paul answered. Barnabas didn't seem to realise that he was going to Jerusalem to fight for the salvation of mankind.

"But, Paul, it was your passion of love for men that first made you work. Why do you squeeze all the joy and kindness out of life now?"

"You don't understand! James and Peter may make my vision and my work both useless," Paul cried.

"They can't do that," Barnabas said gravely. "If the spiritual world is the real world, nobody can spoil your vision but yourself."

"Can I live in an ecstasy and yet call men to salvation?" Paul asked bitterly.

"Perhaps only ecstasy will save them. Does not Christ's passion raise the dead?" Barnabas answered.

And after that they did not talk any more.

XII

PETER still lived in his house on the wall of Jerusalem, and nothing had changed in the room in which they all sat. Eleven years was a long time, but Peter had scarcely noticed its passing. Life had gone on without much change since Paul's last visit. They had travelled up and down Galilee and Judea telling the Jewish world that Messiah had come. They had looked after the bodily well-being of the friends who followed the teaching of Jesus. They had worshipped in the Temple. Peter glanced round at the men who filled the room. Yes, it was true. The years had passed. They were all beginning to look old. . . . Why, John, the youngest of them, must be near forty now. Perhaps not so much. He was still as good-looking as ever. Paul was nearer fifty. He had changed least of all. There he sat at the other side of the room, squat and broad-shouldered, bandy-legged, fiery-eyed, hook-nosed, fierce. Perhaps . . . yes, the lines on his face were more deeply cut. Sometimes he looked kind. But the next moment a fierceness would come into his face as if he wanted to drive everybody before him into the way he thought they ought to go. He had brought a thin dark young man with him, whom he called Titus . . . an uncircumcised Greek . . . one of the very men

the row was about. It was to be hoped they would not take him into the Temple.

Barnabas looked older, too. Peter was glad that this time he had come with Paul. Barnabas was easy to get on with. He had known Jesus, so when you spoke of the past he knew what was at the back of your mind. No matter what Barnabas said you felt goodwill behind it. He was as well educated as Paul.

The discussion had been going on for ages. James had begun it by repudiating the agitators. Peter and John had confirmed James's statement. The men who had stirred up the trouble in Antioch had had no authority from them. After his brief statement Peter had said no more. He hoped that he himself was not as impulsive and hot-tempered now as he had been eleven years ago, but it was better to leave the talking to James. He might put his foot in it. John was silent, too. John always looked as if he were lost in a dream, but, all the same, nothing escaped him. He saw everything that was going on. There was no doubt they had allowed the teaching to go too far in Antioch, but Barnabas was in it as well as Paul, so what else could they do? On that first visit of Paul's he had taken no interest in the Kingdom. He had tried to change the subject when the talk was of what Jesus had said and done before his resurrection. . . . What effect would Paul have now on John and the other brethren?

Barnabas had just finished explaining the situation at Antioch. Paul had not yet spoken. When he once began he never stopped. That last time James had encouraged Paul more than he, Peter, had. Peter remembered his

fear that James would agree with all Paul's new ideas. But a still stranger thing had happened. James had gone back to the strictest practice of the Law. He was always praying in the Temple now. Peter sighed. How fatuous to think he had any power to encourage or discourage Paul . . . a man with a face like that on him! Paul needed no encouragement . . . especially from one whom he despised as he did Peter. . . . The truth was, he never could stand up to Paul. Even to-day, after his own years of authority, he was afraid of him. But there was such a thing as being too humble.

James was speaking now in praise of the Law. Paul wouldn't frown like that if he understood how broad-minded and tolerant James had grown. Peter's heart gave a jump as Paul, leaning forward, leapt into the very heart of the discussion.

"No man was ever more devoted to Judaism than I. But the Law is dead now," he said.

"Dead!" Peter exclaimed. He could not help it. Paul nodded.

"Of course, if it is carried out by men who want it to die . . ." Peter stopped short. He must be careful.

"We don't want to add to your difficulties in Antioch, but if your converts understood how helpful the Law is . . ." James began again.

"It's no use to Gentiles. Ask Titus," Paul interrupted calmly.

No use to Gentiles? Peter felt hot. And to answer James like that! You would think Paul was the head of the delegation, and not Barnabas. Gentiles ought to be

grateful for any sort of salvation. Obstinacy and pride. That was what was wrong with them. Jesus had been circumcised. What was good enough for him was surely good enough for pagans? Everyone was looking at the thin, dark foreigner, who had suddenly got very red in the face. How young he was! The youngest man there.

"You always have to be doing something. I mean if you follow the Law." Titus could not control his voice. It went up and down very oddly. He pulled himself together and went on more coherently :

"If immortal life depends on sacrifice in the Temple in Jerusalem, we Greeks cannot be saved, for we are not allowed in!"

"You would be if you were circumcised," Peter interrupted.

"Not always," Barnabas reminded him.

"I hate outward observances. A man may commit no sin against rules, and yet be a villian," Paul said abruptly.

"Our rules came from Moses," Peter remonstrated.

"The Egyptians were circumcised long before Moses," Paul retorted.

Peter was confused. What a lot Paul knew! He had never heard that about circumcision before . . . though of course Moses had been born in Egypt.

"But Moses was inspired . . ." he stammered.

"Do you think the Judge of all the world is going to save or damn His creatures about a piece of skin?" Paul demanded.

"But if God gives an inspiration. After all, He is our Father . . ." Peter hesitated.

"Is He ours and not his?" Paul asked, pointing to Titus.

Titus turned to Peter, both hands out like a suppliant.

"We want to worship your Jehovah," he said. "He is high-minded and just, not like our gods. It cannot be that He offers salvation with one hand and takes it back with the other. And now, with Christ to plead for us . . . He would surely listen to Christ . . ."

"He listens to us," Peter interrupted.

"He chose you. And when He saw we couldn't be Jews, he allowed Christ to come as a link . . ."

"It's a Greek idea," Peter said hastily.

"It's none the worse for that." John suddenly came out of his dream and smiled at Titus.

"No, no! I didn't mean that." Peter was confused again. . . . But it was just like John to intervene when you weren't expecting it.

"We all need a mediator," Paul said.

"You don't understand. . . . I only meant . . . Jesus is Messiah . . ." Peter could not find words.

"Messiah or Mediator, what do names matter?" Paul was impatient. "You always go back to the same old thoughts, Peter. Have you learnt nothing in all these years? You must see that we cannot impose the ceremonial law on our converts!"

"No Jew ever had a scheme of salvation. He left it to God," Peter said.

"Well, the Gentiles won't!" Paul retorted.

"It will put the stricter Jews against us," Peter grumbled.

"James is strict enough." John's voice had a reassuring note in it, as if he had guessed Peter's fear. It was true. They wouldn't dare to do anything to James.

"Are you afraid they will persecute you, or is it only that you want to keep something for yourself that was meant for humanity?" Paul asked suddenly. His voice was hard.

Peter was shaken. It was nasty of Paul to think that about him . . . and yet it had been in his mind.

"It's a practical question, Peter," Barnabas put in kindly. "The number of Christians outside Judea will soon be greater than your small group in Jerusalem. Judaism may be swamped by the rush of pagans who accept Christ's teaching. What are you going to do about it?"

"Isn't there room in the Kingdom?" Peter began as boldly as he could but faltered when Paul fell on him.

"There will be no Kingdom if you force our converts to circumcise. It ought to be perfectly clear to you by this time that what you have to face is a new revelation."

"Things are always perfectly clear to you," Peter said weakly.

"Are only muddy waters deep?" Paul retorted, and Peter bit his lip. He had done it again. He had not meant to talk, but he had and made a fool of himself as usual.

"God has children outside Judaism, Peter," John put in again comfortingly. . . . Was he patronising, too? Peter had once been jealous of John. . . . Were they all against him? Even James?

"I've been thinking," John went on, "how small things

often mean greater things. . . . Or perhaps I mean that great things are expressed by small. It is the meaning that matters. Circumcision is only a sign that men want to belong to God, and there are many ways of showing that."

"Circumcision of the mind . . . spiritual and not corporeal," Paul said quickly, and John nodded. They were agreeing together already, were they? It was obvious they liked one another.

"Paul said it was clear, but it isn't," Peter complained. John was letting his imagination run away with him.

"You don't understand, Peter." John turned quickly to him. "Paul is like you and me. The search for God is the only thing that makes life worth while to him."

"But he makes it like fishing on a dark night in a dark sea with a torn net. . . ." Peter stopped, confused and ashamed. Was he actually attacking Paul? But Paul was not even annoyed. On the contrary, he seemed interested. But, then, he always had liked to fight.

"It's time this old feeble teaching was done away with. We must learn to reason," Paul said.

At that Peter lost his temper outright.

"Paul is nothing but a free thinker, and he calls it revelation!" he cried.

Paul only smiled. It was John who took the challenge up.

"But, Peter, when we joined Jesus we all broke loose from tradition. He told us to use our minds and be laws to ourselves. We're not great enough for that yet, but if we take our orders from the spirit within us, we will

grow. God will give knowledge to the sleeping soul. Revelation may rise quickly to Paul's mind and slowly to ours. But inspiration comes from God."

"There is bad as well as good inspiration," Peter grumbled, and John replied:

"Yes. You mustn't take anyone's inspiration for your guide until you try it. But don't you remember that Jesus said a father would never give stones for bread?" and at that Paul said:

"John is right. If the inspiration comes from God you know. God never offers starving men sawdust or poison to eat. True inspiration helps us to grow. But what growth can outside righteousness, like observing times and seasons, bring to the soul? Our bodies were born to sin but now by Christ's sacrifice our spirits can escape death."

"No Jew needs a mediator. You make Jesus into a Greek God!" Peter burst out. It wasn't exactly what he meant to say . . . and surely he had said it before? But they were going too fast. He couldn't quite see to what they were committing him. He didn't mean to be stubborn, either, but how could he help holding back when he was sure Paul was wrong?

"Are the Greeks to have no expression of God?" John asked, and Barnabas intervened:

"We tell them of the new life, but we cannot ask them to observe rules for which they see no necessity."

"I have come to believe that each man must find God in his own way . . ." James began, and at that Peter gave up. He could never understand John when he talked

his dreams aloud, but James, too. . . . Paul was breaking up something, and none of the others seemed to see it. There was a small door to which Paul had no key . . . a still voice to which he would not listen. Peter felt helpless. He could never explain. What was Paul demanding now?

"Then you will accept us as Apostles and admit our converts on our terms?"

For a moment James did not speak. Then he said :

"Barnabas has always been one of us, and of course we accept you. But we must impose some rules. Young and weak converts have to be guarded from vice, as a farmer guards small growing trees from cattle."

"Not circumcision. I won't put that yoke on our necks again," Paul said firmly.

"Can't we begin by seeing what we can do without? How much of the law is to remain in force for Christians?" Barnabas suggested.

"What rules do you think necessary?" John asked.

"Not ones that kill the life within. Christ came to free us from those," Paul answered.

"Any rules that men revere will teach them some truth about God," John said.

"Jesus said you don't get to know God by thinking of Him, but by watching Him work," Peter objected, and John smiled.

"Well, let us watch His work with the Gentiles!" he said.

"Paul's rules will bind people just as much as the rules of Moses do," Peter replied, and Paul turned to him

kindly Peter saw, but as a man turns to explain to a child :

"I never suggested we were to give up all the rules of Moses. The moral law still stands. Growth means limitation. If you want to learn Greek you must not try to study mathematics at the same moment."

Peter opened his lips to reply, but James, intervening, said :

"Don't let us judge or try to rule each other, Peter. You can't change people's opinions by fighting them. You only make them more fixed. Let us settle what rules are necessary. We all need some rules to help us to climb out of the pit."

So Peter ceased to try to explain, and after that it was easy to agree.

To please James, they refused the Gentiles permission to eat blood or strangled animals. Paul insisted that immorality must be forbidden them. The Gentiles saw no harm in fornication. And Peter listened while James explained to Titus that it was God's plan that in this life all that is spiritual must get its impetus from the ground beneath the feet, and that family duties and an orderly life were ordained to teach men how to live the higher life of the spirit. Paul did not quite agree, Peter saw, with this explanation. But when he said :

"To be at home in the body is to be absent from God," John, full of a thought of his own that he wanted to express, gave Paul no chance to explain his meaning.

"If the Gentiles are reborn they cannot sin, for the nature of God will live in them then," John said.

Paul, Peter saw, had opened his lips to reply when

Barnabas made him forget what he was going to say by suddenly asking James :

"Will you add that they are not to eat food offered to idols? When we try to explain inspiration to them, they think it comes if they eat food sacrificed to the gods. They imagine that in sharing food they share life."

"How can what we eat bring us near to God? It is gross superstition, and must be stopped," Paul broke in and Peter never heard why he thought that God could not be there if men felt at home in the bodies He had given them.

It was agreed that Christians were to be forbidden to eat food that had been offered to idols and then they decided to call a meeting of all the members of the Jerusalem community to introduce Paul and Titus and announce the decisions to which the leaders had come. After that James said :

"One thing worries me. Our indulgence may lead strict Jews to shut their synagogues against you. Then, except in Antioch, you will have no educated audience."

"We have the world," Paul replied.

"Greece and Italy?" Peter blurted out. "Only slaves will listen there!"

"Then we will speak to the slaves," Paul retorted. His eyes burnt with such enthusiasm that Peter's anger melted. That side of Paul was great. . . . But, all the same, he was wrong. He had never known Jesus so he had got wild ideas in his head. He would split them off from Judaism. Worse than that, he would cut them off from the memory of the actual teaching of Jesus himself . . .

and that meant failure. How could a tree live apart from its roots? . . . But nobody seemed to understand.

XIII

BEFORE Paul left Jerusalem he went to see Mary of Magdala. He had never forgotten her. Mary, like the others, was growing old. Her face was lined and her hair grey, but she was still upright as a flame, and her spirit, serene and gay, shone through her eyes, Paul thought, like a light in a battered lantern. She was delighted to see him and her welcome warmed his heart. There was something about Mary that encouraged you to be frank. You could talk freely. She never seemed to suspect your motives . . . perhaps because her own were good. It was only evil-minded people who saw their own evil everywhere. Mary was really interested in you, too. She didn't withdraw her mind every now and then, as the self-lover did, to consider her own affairs.

At first they talked of the changes that eleven years had brought. The disciples in Jerusalem had given up having things in common. That plan hadn't worked. They still shared. Nobody starved if his neighbour had food. They were not so sure that Jesus was coming back immediately. Half a generation had passed since his death. That wasn't long enough to make ready for him. Mary had never believed in his second coming. It was more likely, she said, that they would go to him. Paul

didn't agree. He had been turning the idea of the Kingdom over and over and again in his mind, he told Mary, and he was now convinced that its meaning was that Christ, who had proved his power by his resurrection, meant to establish a new order. The old age had gone, and Paul was sure it was in this sense he had talked of the Kingdom. In the old dispensation no Jew was sure of salvation. In the new their job was to offer it freely to all mankind. It was a hard task . . . much harder than Paul had thought eleven years before. But it must be done. And now that he could preach freely to the Gentiles, it would be easier. Paul found himself telling Mary of his triumph over Peter and James.

"I've got rid of their opposition and I can go ahead. That conflict is over," he ended.

"I wonder if James understands it as you do?" Mary reflected.

"How else could he understand it?" Paul asked, and Mary smiled.

"James is just," she said. "If he made an agreement he will keep it. But he is growing more strict every year. They say his feet are as hard and dry as a camel's because he stands for hours in prayer."

"His devotion to the Temple has certainly grown," Paul replied. And Mary explained that the devotion was not political.

"James will never use the Temple as a centre for nationalist work, as the priests do. It is just that he finds it a help to worship there. You know. Paul, I always

said you'd go back to the Gentiles. You and Peter could never agree. It's better to separate."

"I don't regard myself as in any way inferior to Peter," Paul began, and Mary laughed.

"You needn't tell me that, Paul!"

"I have not the arrogance to class myself with Peter or any of these leaders," Paul replied ironically. He wasn't annoyed when Mary made fun of him. He accepted from her what he resented from Barnabas. "Peter has changed," he went on, "and not for the better. His life here is too narrow. He has nobody to measure himself with but himself, and to compare yourself with yourself doesn't lead to wisdom. He has become a boaster."

"Peter only boasts because he's not sure of himself. He thinks he's stupid," Mary explained.

"So he is," Paul replied promptly. Mary said nothing, so Paul went on.

"I'm no longer sorry for stupidity. If a man is stupid, it is his own fault. If he meets with contempt, it serves him right for not taking the trouble to learn to think."

"But it wouldn't be fair if only the clever could know God. The intellect despises too much to see the truth. You mustn't make your salvation depend on the mind. If poor men stopped work to learn to think, they'd starve," Mary objected.

"Salvation depends on faith," Paul said.

"You haven't changed, Paul, have you?" Mary asked. "I still think that you and Peter mean the same thing only you don't like one another, so you can't agree."

"We don't mean the same thing," Paul replied emphatically.

"Oh, dear," Mary said, "I wish we could find a way in which we could believe what we do believe, and leave other people free to believe as they believe. That would be freedom."

"It would be death," Paul answered.

"Haven't you found out yet that you can never convince people by argument?" Mary asked.

"I frequently do it!" Paul replied. He wasn't angry. To appreciate reason was not a woman's gift . . . though Mary was clever. She had that power of flaring up into better understanding that gave personal talk its value.

"I expect you were born debating," Mary said. "John is like you, too. He always goes back to the mind. But he doesn't withhold love from people when he doesn't agree with their opinions."

"And I do?" Paul asked. He really wanted to know.

Mary's eyes lit up again. It was odd to see the light brighten until it effaced the battered lantern.

"I don't know, Paul. That would be the greatest tyranny of all, wouldn't it?"

"Do you still think Peter knows something that I don't?" Paul asked.

"It's fading a little," Mary answered. "Peter can't see things through his mind, and he's afraid of people who try to make him. When he starts groping for the deeper knowledge he once had and can't find it, he's paralysed. Life has no meaning for him if you take away

his memories of Jesus and the teaching of the Kingdom."

"But I do preach the Kingdom," Paul protested.

"Yes. . . . As you've just explained. That's not as Peter sees it. But we'll never agree about Peter," Mary replied. "Don't criticise him too much. He's easily discouraged."

"Easily discouraged!" Paul snorted. "He's grown pompous and egotistical."

"Isn't that just his mask?" Mary answered. "He puts it on, because he knows he cannot stand up to you."

"He always goes to pieces the moment there is any serious opposition. People have made too much fuss about him," Paul said dourly.

"It's hard to become famous and remain great," Mary replied. "Peter is weak, and only the strong can keep things in their right place. He gets confused. But if you give him time, he always understands. I've seen him lost in admiration of deeds he feels he could never do. You never see that simple side of him. He's bluff and honest, and when you come along he feels himself turning into somebody else. His bluntness begins to look like denseness, and his honesty like stupidity, and he feels he's only a rough fisherman who can never grasp subtle ideas. Jesus understood him. But, then, Jesus had a way of seeing into people's souls, and not being alarmed or shocked with what He saw. He always seemed to feel that what you are matters more than what you can think."

"But what you think makes you what you are," Paul objected quickly, and Mary nodded.

"Yes, I know. But I meant that he gave us a rule of life, and not a creed. He put kindness first . . . but we've had this out before, Paul. I've often thought of our last talk. You were right, and yet I was right too. The meaning that Jesus gave to life, you said, must be expressed by the mind, but what I wanted to say was that it's bigger than any expression the intellect can reach to. It escapes. . . . Perhaps it's too subtle and fine . . . like the smell of wild thyme on the hills. Jesus never tried to convince by argument. He convinced by . . ." She hesitated, "by being himself," she added.

"He was the Power and Wisdom of God," Paul answered.

Mary said nothing for a moment, then she asked:

"I suppose you could never reverence anybody who was your equal? You must feel he's far above you?"

"Don't you believe Christ was the very incarnation of God?" Paul replied by questioning.

"Does James?" Mary asked.

Paul shook his head. He did not know.

"Messiah, perhaps," Mary considered. "Greeks could believe that Jesus was a god, but we Jews . . . well, were we not taught that God is separated from man by an impassable gulf?"

"He has not exactly the same nature that we have . . ." Paul stopped. "I must think that out," he added.

"You always go back to the mind, Paul," Mary said, and Paul defended himself eagerly.

"How can I do otherwise when a Power outside myself pushes me to explain to men the truth that has been revealed to me?"

For a moment Mary did not speak. Then she said:

"What about beauty, Paul? Would you leave that out?"

"Beauty?" Paul asked, and looked at her. He could no longer see the battered lantern of her face. He saw nothing but the brave and gay spirit that shone through her eyes, and deliberately he turned his mind to consider her suggestion. The smell of wild thyme on the mountains . . . the desert and the clear air . . . the loneliness and the peace . . . that sense of something great that brooded over life. Suddenly all the feelings he had had in Arabia were back again. Was that magic and romance and passion of the soul always there behind his mind, even when he shoved it down, as he had done to tell other men about salvation?

"Beauty?" he repeated. "Beauty must wait. Would you have me stop to hold it now? The time is too short for beauty. We must work while we have daylight."

They were silent for a moment, and when Mary spoke it seemed to Paul that she had forgotten her question.

"Jesus was right. We are like children playing in the market-place, ignorant of our true greatness, forgetting the vision that was born with us to illuminate life. I'm getting old, Paul. I can no longer live in action. I sink into my memories, weighing and valuing my life. My sins that blotted out the vision . . . then my friendship

with Jesus. I keep asking myself if anything matters but beauty?" She paused. She had not forgotten it, then? Paul waited until she began again.

"When people first see beauty they believe it to be eternal. Children do. But they live commonplace lives into which wonder and adventure seldom come, and slowly dust covers up the vision that they brought here with them. They forget even the passion that ought to remind them. . . . If they had known Jesus and heard him talk of the Kingdom . . ."

"You always go back to the Kingdom!" Paul said, smiling at her, and she answered:

"He said, 'Seek first the Kingdom.' Then all the glories of imagination will be added to you. 'He that hath marvelled shall reign.' He said that, too. His Kingdom is not imagination, Paul. It's real. Just as the body lives by breath the spirit lives by its laws. Romance and adventure and beauty are within one's mind, and eternal life is here or nowhere. They are all to be plucked from dull daily life . . . when you know how."

Mary stopped speaking, and Paul sat silent. Beauty was there, like a sensible presence . . . like the smell of wild thyme on the hills.

"We don't understand because we won't go far enough," she said. "Jesus made life a greater affair than we do . . . great and fine . . . every common thing with a glory . . . but we won't abandon ourselves."

She ceased. Paul did not speak.

"How you must have loved him, Mary!" he said at last.

"Could I have learnt if I had not loved?" she answered. Then she sighed.

Paul watched the battered lantern slowly assert itself. She was old again now. She laughed.

"I once heard a Greek say that experience was the mother of all useful arts. Perhaps it's the mother of religion, too. If you practise your imaginations, they become certainties. . . . We're too proud to try, Paul. 'The road is narrow that leads to life, and those who find it are few.' Jesus said that. I was lucky. Was I not right when I said that people who really care are always saying the same thing, but in different tongues? Don't let us talk about it any more, Paul. Tell me about yourself."

And Paul did.

XIV

YEARS afterwards Paul, from Ephesus, wrote his version of the dispute with Peter.

After that visit to Jerusalem Paul's real wanderings had begun. Mary had been right. James had not understood the agreement as Paul had done. The settlement had been no settlement. His triumph over Peter and James had not lasted long. He had thought the conflict ended when, in truth, it had only begun. It had haunted him ever since. In every place in which he had preached the misunderstanding had cropped up again. Even in a province so far away as Galatia, even in Europe itself, he now had to fight Jewish opposition.

Judas and Silas, Paul recalled before he began to write to the Galatians, had been sent back to Antioch with Barnabas and himself, carrying that letter from the leaders in which it was stated that the strict observance of the law was not to be demanded of Gentiles. They had delivered the letter and gone back to Jerusalem. (Paul and Silas had become great friends.) They had no sooner left than Peter had arrived hot foot out of Judea. But it was a new Peter, whom Paul had never seen . . . a man flying from death, no longer pompous and self-satisfied, but shaken and terrified, with a long tale of

persecution to tell. Peter, Paul reflected, had always lived in the moment. He had never looked to consequences, so, naturally, he had not expected persecution. From his confused story a few facts were clear. The Emperor Caligula had been murdered. All the Empire rejoiced at that, but it was especially good news to the Jews. For he had ordered his image to be set up in the Temple to be worshipped, and had been determined to enforce the order.

For more than a generation that threat of desecration and forced idolatry had hung over Judaism. Tiberius had demanded the worship of his effigy, but Pilate the Procurator had had the wisdom to postpone carrying out the order. He had brought the standards with the Emperor's effigy on them into Jerusalem secretly, by a back way. Tiberius had died just in time, and now Caligula, too, had gone before his will could be carried out. the Sadducees and Zealots, and, indeed, every strict Jew, had always been prepared to rebel and die rather than allow such desecration. It was partly, Peter said . . . and here he spoke with knowledge . . . a real devotion, based on the defense of worship in the Temple as a necessity for salvation, and partly a question of profit. The livelihood of the priests and citizens of Jerusalem depended on the prestige of the Temple. If that were destroyed, what would become of the pilgrim traffic from the four corners of the earth? Now that danger was over but a new one that threatened the followers of Jesus had risen. Claudius, the new Emperor, was friendly to Judaism. He had put his friend, Herod

Agrippa the Tetrarch of Galilee, on the throne of Judea, and Herod, to conciliate his new subjects in Jerusalem, and to show that he meant to defend the sanctity of the Temple, had started to suppress the new teaching. Had not Jesus been accused of a plot to pull down the Temple, Peter complained, when all he had said was that if the sanctuary were corrupted by money-making, or even destroyed, men could still worship God in their hearts? Now Herod was attacking those disciples who preached the same doctrine. He dared not touch James, who was too strict a Jew. But he had seized and beheaded James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

"When they thought Jesus was going to be King they were set on their right to drink at his table out of his cup. They have done it now!" Peter said brokenly.

They had all been kind to him, Paul remembered, and Peter, relieved and comforted in the security of Antioch, had gone to pieces. How contemptible he had been! He had stayed much longer than the recognised two days, for, comfortable, he had not wanted to move on. Paul, watching, had seen Peter bombarded by ideas new to him, and unable to settle what to do with them. He had dropped all the ritual which, under the eye of James, he had observed in Jerusalem. He had been more Gentile than the Gentiles. He had eaten and drunk all sorts of forbidden things. Peter the wobbler! Peter, who had never faced anything . . . least of all his fear of death. Paul had long since met and conquered that fear, but Peter knew nothing of Philo's desire to die "as to the life of the body in order to obtain an inheritance of the

incorporeal and imperishable life." Perhaps, to be quite just, in the disarray of his flight from Jerusalem, Peter had lost his head, and had been ready to associate with anybody who was kind to him in his lostness? But, in any case, out of that visit to Antioch how many miseries had come? It had cost Paul his friendship with Barnabas. Paul's memory, moving in jumps, recalled isolated things which Barnabas had said that had hurt him badly, and would always hurt.

They were getting too far from the teaching of Jesus, Barnabas had said. Paul was building up a structure they had not expected. . . . But new experience must break up old moulds. Barnabas had not enough spiritual insight to see that change was God's will. Men always fought it at first and then accepted it. There were violent protests, then grumbles, and then a settling down to accept what had happened, forgetting the past.

"How can we lead men to God if we use the world's weapons?" That was one of the things Barnabas had said.

"Your values are wrong. You may explain God by the mind, but you can't find Him by it." That was another thing.

"Every day men are fighting your revelations. They will always fight them," Barnabas had declared. That had hurt most of all. For of course the Jews fought his revelations, because they were afraid of losing the Roman licence to worship according to the law of Moses. It was fear, not true religion.

Paul's indignation boiled up as he thought of the

hindrances which his opponents had put in his way, of the difficulties he still had to meet. They were now trying to pervert his converts in Galatia. They had had their instructions, no doubt. But from whom? Paul had his suspicions, but he must not put them in a letter. . . . He had lost Mark's friendship too. . . . But Mark did not count much. He had deserted them once before. . . . He was Barnabas's cousin, and had always had a reverence for Peter. He could not see Peter's weakness. But the Galatians must! Paul began to write.

"To the churches in Galatia.

"From Paul, an Apostle whose commission is not from men, but is given by Jesus Christ and by God the Father."

That was his strength. In spite of the denials of his enemies, his position had been given him by God.

"I am astonished," he went on, "at your so soon deserting God, who called you, through the love of Christ, for a different 'Good News,' which is really no Good News at all. But, then, I know that there are people who are harassing you, and who want to pervert the Good News of the Christ. Yet even if we—or if an angel from Heaven—were to tell you any other 'Good News' than that which we told you, may he be accursed! We have said it before, and I repeat it now. If anyone tells you a 'Good News' other than that which you received, may he be accursed!"

It was strongly put, but it was true, and must be said. The Galatians were changing his Gospel for another Gospel. There were not two Gospels. The one salvation

was salvation by faith. His revelation was unique and complete. He had told them that time after time. But would the Galatians remember? He would tell them again!

"When God, who had set me apart even before my birth, and who called me by His love, saw fit to reveal His son in me, so that I might tell the Good News of him among the Gentiles, at once, instead of consulting any human being, or even going up to Jerusalem to see those who were Apostles before me, I went into Arabia, and came back again to Damascus. Three years afterwards I went up to Jerusalem to make the acquaintance of Peter, and I stayed a fortnight with him. I did not, however, see any other Apostle except James, the Master's brother. (As to what I am now writing to you, I call God to witness that I am speaking the truth.) Afterwards I went to the districts of Syria and Cilicia. But I was still unknown even by sight to the Christian Churches in Judea. . . ."

Paul stopped writing. What had happened after that? His memory stretched back to pick out of all his adventures events which he could string on the thread of the disputes with Jerusalem. He had been to Jerusalem and had returned to Antioch just three years after his revelation. . . . Eleven years had passed before he had seen Peter again . . . eleven years which he had spent working in Syria and Cilicia with Barnabas. Then the agitators had come. Paul began writing again.

"Fourteen years afterwards, on account of the false brothers who had crept in to spy in order to bring us back

to slavery, I went up to Jerusalem again with Barnabas, and I took Titus also with me. We did not for a moment yield submission to these spies, that the Truth of the Good News might be yours always.

"I laid before the Apostles the Good News that I am proclaiming among the Gentiles. I did this privately, before those who are thought highly of, for fear I might possibly be taking, or might already have taken, a course which would prove useless. Yet even my companion, Titus, though a Greek, was not compelled to be circumcised. . . ."

The scene of the discussion rose before Paul as vividly as if it had happened yesterday. John, with his clear, kind eyes, lost in dreams, but with a good mind of his own. John knew how to reconcile opposites. James, too, narrow and just, his intelligence moving in ruts. And Peter . . . Peter had been pompous and self-important, puffed up with his position of a leader. What a man to be at the head of the Church! Paul began to write again, hastily and hotly:

"Those who have the air of being something, who are thought notables . . . what they once were makes no difference to me . . . God does not recognise human distinctions—those, I say, who are thought highly of added nothing to my message. On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the Good News for the Gentiles, just as Peter had been for the Jews. For he who gave Peter power for his mission to the Jews gave me, also, power to go to the Gentiles. Recognising the charge entrusted to me, James, Peter and John, who

were regarded as pillars of the Church, openly acknowledged Barnabas and me as fellow-workers, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. . . .”

That had been his triumph. But the agreement had not been kept. Paul went on with the draft of his letter.

“But when Peter came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, for he stood self-condemned. He had been in the habit of eating with the Gentile converts; but when certain persons came from James, he began to withdraw and hold aloof, for fear of offending those who still held to circumcision. The rest of the Jewish converts were guilty of the same hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led away by it. But when I saw that they were not dealing straight-forwardly with the Truth of the Good News, I said to Peter, before them all: ‘If you, who were born a Jew, adopt Gentile customs instead of Jewish, why are you trying to compel the Gentile converts to adopt Jewish customs?’ ”

Peter’s change of coat had led to all the other evils. Whether James had or had not understood the arrangement in Jerusalem as Paul had, he and Peter had not enforced it on those colonial Jews who hated to renounce the superiority which the law gave them in life and for eternity . . . as they must do if Gentiles were admitted without conditions for Paul’s gospel made all men equal before God. But none of them, not even Barnabas, had even wholeheartedly agreed that it was the only Good News. Even when the truth of Paul’s new revelation had been proved to wobbling Peter, he had always wobbled back to where he had been before. Perhaps the split had

been inevitable. Some men were only fit for bondage. To James, so just and dignified, the Law was still the Law, and no Jew must go against it. James had never used his brains, so he would never be free. He was content to walk with the herd. The ritual of Jerusalem had tied his mind up tight. But the churches in Galatia must be free. If you filled your mind with observances God could never reach it. Paul began again:

"It is for freedom that Christ set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not again be held under the yoke of slavery. Understand that I, Paul, myself tell you that if you allow yourselves to be circumcised, Christ will avail you nothing. I again declare to everyone who receives circumcision, that he binds himself to obey the whole Law. You have severed yourselves from Christ. . . . You who are seeking to be pronounced righteous through Law. . . . You have fallen away from love. For we, by the help of the Spirit, are eagerly waiting for the fulfilment of our hope, that we may be pronounced righteous as the result of faith. If a man be in union with Christ Jesus, neither is circumcision nor the omission of it anything, but faith, working through love, is everything. Remember, brothers, the Call came to give you freedom."

Paul paused.

What proof could he give them of that? Why, the inspiration that had fallen upon them!

"Here is the one thing that I want to find out from you. Did you receive the Spirit as the result of obedience to Law, or of your having listened with faith? Can you

be so foolish? After beginning with what is spiritual, do you now end with what is external? Did you go through so much to no purpose? If indeed it really was to no purpose. God, who supplies you abundantly with His Spirit, and endows you with such powers . . . does He do this as a result of obedience to Law? Or as the result of your having listened with faith?"

It was unanswerable! The proof of the pudding was in the eating. They had recognised that fact when he was with them.

"You were once making good progress. Who has hindered you from obeying the Truth? The persuasion brought to bear on you does not come from God, who calls you. A little leaven leavens all the dough. I, through my union with the Lord, am persuaded that you will learn to think with me. But the man who is disturbing your minds will have to bear his punishment; whoever he may be."

The instructions must have come from James, who, sitting in security in Jerusalem, had no understanding of the fight going on outside for the Gospel. James might not have understood the agreement, but he went too far when he told his followers in the provinces to say that Paul still recognised the necessity of the ceremonial law. Why, if he still preached the whole Law, were all these obstacles put in his way by Jews? Why, if he were still a strict Jew, had he so many Gentile and uncircumcised friends? Titus had never been circumcised, and Luke, a Gentile, had been with them all the time! He had joined

himself to the mission, but he had made no pretence at becoming a Jew.

Luke was a great gain. Paul loved him dearly. His knowledge of medicine and his power of writing were of enormous service.

Paul returned to the letter. How silly to say he was still preaching Judaism, when the statement could so easily be refuted! He had only to tell of the fights the Jews had brought about.

For after the quarrel Barnabas had gone off to Cyprus with Mark, and Paul and Silas, who had returned to Antioch because of the persecution against the liberal Jews of Jerusalem, had decided to preach in places to which no Gospel had yet been carried, and where the Jews could not interfere. That mission was the first which he had led as an independent Apostle. Paul began to add up the places in which they had preached. Syria and Cilicia, Derbe and Lystra. (Timothy had joined them there.) They had made many converts, but generally a Jewish counter movement had sprung up, and sometimes the Jews had proved stronger than Paul. In Iconium there had been a riot. The Jews had pulled him outside the town and stoned him there and left him for dead. When he had recovered consciousness he had crawled away into shelter. He had been badly broken, but his disciples had found him, and through their care he had recovered. Then he, with Timothy, had gone to Antioch in Pisidia. Here Paul had been allowed to preach in the synagogue, but soon that favour had been withdrawn. The Jews had refused to have him there any

longer. So he had preached openly outside the synagogue to the pagans. And then again the Jews had stirred up the magistrates, and Paul and his friends had been banished. It was odd that the Jews pursued him, while in Jerusalem the Christians were left in peace!

Paul took up his pen again :

"If I, brothers, am still proclaiming circumcision, why am I persecuted? Has the Cross ceased to be a scandal?"

Paul looked with satisfaction at the words he had just written. What else should he say? After all, perhaps it was natural that the leaders in Jerusalem should try to conceal the quarrel. They were trying to save their faces. They dare not disown him publicly. . . . But it was futile to attempt to hide such an obvious split, when everybody knew that at the beginning they had received him as one of themselves.

How could sane, thinking men believe that an outside rite such as circumcision had anything to do with salvation? It was more foolish than the pagan idea that voluntary eunuchs were dearer to God than whole men. A thought struck Paul, and he smiled grimly as he added :

"I could even wish that the people who are upsetting you about circumcision would go still further and castrate themselves outright."

The Galatians would see the significance of that. The cults of Cybele and Attis, with their ritual mutilations, were well known in Galatia. It would show . . . them that he did not rest his Gospel on ritual though his friends needed no proof of that. The sufferings which the

Jews had inflicted on him were enough to show that he had broken with the Law.

What troubles they had had!

When they had been thrown out of Antioch in Pisidia they had discussed where they could go. Paul had wanted to go to Roman Asia. But that proved impossible. When they reached the borders of Mysia, the authorities would not allow them to go into Bithynia. It was that night that Paul had had the vision which had sent him to Greece. In his dreams he saw a Macedonian, who stood and called to him, and what he said was: "Come over into Macedonia and help us." So they had gone to Europe. That had been his first visit. Luke had written it all down. He was making a book of their journeys. Troas, in Neopolis. Philippi (he and Silas had been in prison there). Salonica (they had stayed some months). Then from Beroea to Athens . . . he would not think of Athens. From Athens he had gone to Corinth, and now he was at Ephesus.

At first he had lived amongst Jews only. For three months they had allowed him the use of the synagogue. Then, as in all the other Jewish communities in Roman Asia, opposition had sprung up. He had been accused of disturbing the unity of the faith. So he had hired the lecture-hall, and the liberal Jews and the Gentiles had come freely to hear him. The situation had grown complicated. Now he was fighting not only Jewish, but also pagan opposition. Should he tell of the dispute with the artists who worked for the temple of Artemis of the Ephesians, that cruel goddess? The Temple was a nest

of magic and evil, and the priests the servants of Artemis, eunuchs, bloated unhealthy and swollen, or lean hard-faced and sour, hid behind the artists, their servants. The Temple was one of the seven wonders of the world. Demetrius, the silversmith, a black-bearded man, keen-minded and cruel, pretended that he fought to preserve its loveliness and the beauty of its statues from desecration. But he and his fellow-craftsmen knew well that if the Ephesians turned to the worship of God and of Christ, their work of making copies of the shrine and the statue of Artemis (which the perjured priests said had fallen from Heaven) would end. The priests would lose as heavily as the craftsmen, for they sold the models to the thousands of pilgrims who came to worship at the shrine of hideous Artemis, that many-breasted Eastern Goddess. The dispute had led to a riot. Paul had seen the crowd rush to the theatre and, pulling his cloak over his head, had run too. They had gone in by the side entrance between the actors' dressing-rooms and their gymnasium. They had raced down the long passage, over the paving-stones that covered the rain-water canal, round the end of the front row of seats, into the first side alley and up the radius. They had climbed higher and higher, and at last had found empty seats in the top row of the half circle. Excitement had wiped out all social distinctions. Far down, Paul could see that the seats of the patricians in the centre, just opposite the great wall of the stage, had filled up with rabble. It was evident the caretakers had not expected a performance. There were

no cushions. The awning was rolled back, and the tall stage doors were open.

Priests and craftsmen had crowded on to the stage. They filled its three arches like the overlarge chorus of a half-rehearsed play. A movement began at the back . . . the mob on the stage divided . . . a small figure was pushed forward into the centre arch, and the great doors swung shut behind it. Alexander looked like a pigmy standing there against the enormous wall. Small wonder that he made matters worse! For when he began to speak and the wall threw back the sound so that Paul in the highest row could hear every word, he seemed to be the only man there who understood. Alexander, a known Jew, trying to explain that other Jews were alien to him! And this to a crowd that saw no difference between Jew and Christian. The babble grew worse. Alexander asked for silence, but did not get it. . . . A priest came forward. . . . Then Paul saw a face close to him that he knew. There was a whispered warning, and they stealthily left the theatre. . . . He might have to leave Ephesus, too. This riot was the first dispute of any size which he had had in Roman Asia with a pagan population. Perhaps it marked a parting of the ways. People were beginning to talk of the Roman law of associations, and to ask if the Christians came under its provisions. . . . The Jews were trying to prove that Christians were alien to Judaism, and had no right to seek its support. It was a fight in which there could be no retreat. Truly he could tell the Galatians that he had fought with

wild beasts here in this city. And he would continue to fight. Beauty must wait.

Paul's attention turned to his letter. He had spent more than a year . . . in fact, eighteen months . . . in Corinth. When he had left where had he gone? He should, of course, go back to Corinth but he never wanted to set foot again in Athens. He hated to think of it. And this though the Jews had no influence there and the Athenians did not riot over creeds. No. They were too superior and self-satisfied to quarrel over religion! Only philosophers were listened to there. But he must not think of Athens. He must finish his letter.

By this time the distance between himself and Peter and James had so widened that the road on which Paul now walked was out of sight of that by which Peter went. They no longer had any understanding of one another, and no reconciliation was possible between their two explanations of the life and death of Jesus. The Christ, who to Paul had brought salvation, was to the Jews a Greek god, whose relationship to God the Father was an impossible blasphemy. There was no bridge across that gulf. The friendship with Barnabas was broken. Mark's affection, too, had gone. Peter and James looked coldly on him. Whose was the fault? Was it in him or in them? Paul took up his pen again and wrote:

"The whole law is summed up in one precept: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' "

The pen dropped from his fingers. Had they done that? Had he? Human nature was incurably wicked.

The one hope was in salvation through Christ. Sadly Paul took up his pen :

“Circumcision is nothing. The omission of it is nothing. But a new nature is everything. May all who rule their lives by this find peace and mercy. They are God’s Israel. . . .”

He put down his pen. He would finish it later.

XV.

WHEN Paul went to Athens he came from Beroëa to the sea at Dium, a short journey of about twenty miles. Here, with Timothy, he took a passage on a ship bound for the Piræus. At Dium, Olympus rose steep from the shore, nine thousand feet high, with its head in the clouds. Its lower slopes were covered by forest, and when the clouds shifted you saw its broad top, white with snow. Paul felt afterwards that it was the sight of Olympus which had led to his humiliation at Athens. For all the way down the Thermaic Gulf the sailors and passengers were looking back at the blunt cone with awe. Nobody, except Paul, paid any attention to the magnificent range of mountains further south. Pelion and Ossa were neglected. Everyone's eyes were set on Olympus. On that snow-covered top, broken by smaller summits, the sailors told Paul, the Greek gods lived and looked down on the world. There were gates in the clouds which shut off the city from the sight of men. The Gatekeepers were the Hours.

So Paul, lonely on the boat (for Timothy, with his bad stomach, was sea-sick all that voyage), listened and made friends with the sailors. He was interested, and asked them questions. He made no comment in words,

but in his mind he criticised. The sailors who talked were pure Greek. They plied between Athens and Berœa. Their religion was Greek, too. They talked of their gods as no one in Roman Asia could have done, with a simple assumption that everybody believed as they did. They had had no experience of discussion such as took place daily in Cilicia or Antioch, where every man you met had a different creed, and you must reconcile them as you could. Not even Judaism was pure in Roman Asia. But these simple men knew nothing of such divisions. To them the creeds of Greece were the creeds of the world.

Paul let them talk. It was his first contact with Attica, and he was full of a great curiosity. He wanted to learn as much as he could. All his life he had heard of Athens. The civilised world revered the Greeks as the greatest thinkers of their time, and though Paul held back against this judgment (for what Jew did not despise the Greek ignorance of theology), still he was a lover of the Grecians, and had always been ready to agree that, apart from the Prophets, the Greek great men were the greatest. But now, on his way to Athens, as he listened to the superstitious sailors, in his heart he began to doubt. Was Greece so great? No intelligent Greek he knew believed in these silly tales of the gods, and yet they allowed the ignorant mob to spread foolish gossip about the doings on Olympus. They must know of the wasted devotion of thousands of men like these credulous fools who were telling him that the home of the gods was on a broad, snowy height, to which an energetic man could climb

if he would. Did they make no effort to enlighten them? Evidently the intellectual Greeks paid no heed to what the multitude believed. Perhaps they felt that their creeds were dying, and they had nothing else to give the people? If the Greek gods had ever existed outside Greek imagination, they were only minor spirits, crooked with injustice and falsehood. It ought to be easy to convince intelligent men that a greater creed had now been revealed. Surely the Athenians, with their keen brains, would interest themselves in the new thing he had to tell them? Spiritual truth was self-evident. If the educated believed, the ignorant would follow. There were few Jews in Athens to confuse the issue by fighting with him, as they always did in Roman Asia.

All the way down the Gulf and sailing through the islands of Thessaly Paul planned the conversion of Athens. It was fine weather, and the wind, though fierce, was fair. They made good time scudding along before the wind. The highlands of Macedonia were soon left behind. Snowy Olympus faded away. Pelion and Ossa were lost, and they were passing the long island, and Paul still made his plans. Eubœa vanished, and they began to edge round the Cape of Sunnium. There, high up on the cliffs, far above the smaller hills, the sailors pointed out the white marble pillars of the Temple of Athena, protectress of Attica. She looked far south over the barren little islands to the open sea, from which danger might come, and in her Temple guarded the outposts of Attica. She guarded the ship, too. Her image leant from the prow, and as they doubled the Cape the

waves splashed up and down over her armoured breast. . . . They were sailing west now, towards the island of Ægina. The wind held, and they tacked back to the mainland. . . . There seemed no break in the coast-line as they sailed north again. Paul saw a long plain that sloped to the sea, with a ring of mountains behind it, and in the middle an abrupt hill. There was a huddle of houses below and splendid Temples above. That must be Athens and the Acropolis. Yes! Above the Temples were glints of light. Paul knew, as every traveller did, that the first sight of Athens was the tip of Athena's spear. Her statue stood behind the Parthenon. It was seventy feet high, and when the sun shone you saw the glints on her casque and spear above the roof.

It was a dry and barren country, Paul thought, as they sailed on, hugging the coast. On a dull day it would be colourless, and in winter as black as Judea. The only green to be seen was the broad band of trees that ran at the base of the mountains north of Athens. The sailors were too busy to talk. Timothy only wanted to be left in peace. Paul went as far forward as the deck allowed to watch the coast, and joined himself to a fellow-traveller who also leant over the rail seeing what he could. He was a man with a roving eye and twitching eyebrows.

"Yes," he said, answering Paul's question, one brow up, the other down taking him in, Paul saw, as he spoke, "the only trees are those olives on Mount Parnes. Hy-mettus to the south is as dry and dusty as the coast. I wonder where the bees find their honey. And that is

Pentelicus in the middle, treeless too, streaked with those white quarries."

"Was the harbour many miles further north?" Paul asked.

"North?" the man returned, surprised. "Why! We are almost in now. That cluster of masts over there beyond the rocks is the Piræus! Don't you see the sea wall? It's cut out of the solid rock."

It was true. The sailors were shortening sail. The oars were out, and suddenly the helmsman turned the ship almost at right angles and they ran straight on between the moles to the hidden harbour. In a few moments they were tied up to the quay, with its walls of solid blocks of cut stone, like those at Cesarea, built without mortar and fastened with iron clamps pinned into drilled holes with lead.

Many of the passengers as soon as their feet touched the land hurried at once towards a Temple close by, and the man, shrugging his shoulders, turned to Paul.

"They are off to give thanks to Poseidon for a safe voyage. Are you not going too?" he asked.

"I am a Jew," Paul replied.

"I thought you might be. Well, I'm almost an atheist myself. Shall we walk to Athens together?"

Paul explained that he must find a lodging for his friend, who was too sick to go on, and the man, who seemed to know the harbour well, brought him to a house near the quays, where they left Timothy. It was better that Paul should find cheaper lodgings in Athens. They were too poor to stay long at the inn. To-morrow Tim-

othy could join him. Paul arranged where to meet him. Then he and his new friend left the quays and struck into the straight road that led to Athens.

"I am a Greek from Macedonia," the man told Paul when they had settled into their stride. "We are just as good Greeks as these people here, but they won't acknowledge it, though the Romans govern them from Macedonia."

"As they do us from Cēsarea," Paul said. . . . He must correct that idea which was always cropping up, . . . that Jews were atheists, but he would do it later. . . . In the meantime, he spoke of what he saw around him. The Macedonian was not surprised that Paul could not conceal his disappointment. Yes, this was Athens, he said. This flat ugly city with those odd elevations standing out in its middle. No, he did not mind Paul's criticisms. The seven-miles walk between the ruined walls, straight up from the sea, was as dull as any walk in the world. In places where the ruins of the wall were not broken down they spoilt the view, and everywhere between the port and Athens the small mean houses crowded upon you.

"Plato says the road to Athens was made for conversation. I suppose in his time you couldn't see over the walls, so there was nothing to do but talk!" the man said.

No, he had never been to Jerusalem. He had never climbed up to the Temple. Magnificent, was it? Like climbing to the heavens? He laughed.

"You won't climb to the heavens in Athens, though

there are gods enough to fill a dozen. You should see Corinth! It's a go-ahead city. Here, they never mend anything and they never clear anything away. There's an inscription on a stone in the Roman Market that just sums them up. It always makes me laugh. You know they sided with Pompey in his fight with Julius Cæsar and lost, as they would. Well, Julius built up part of the market for them, and cut on a stone that he pardoned them 'In consideration of their great dead.' That's Athens. The best part of her is underground. She lives on her ancient greatness. All their buildings are old, but the Gate on the Acropolis isn't finished yet. There's a Temple to Zeus near the river in a lonely place where no woman will go to draw water. They started that, too, hundreds of years ago, and you can still see the half-finished columns. I suppose they'll wait for a Roman to finish it. In Corinth they'd build it up in a year."

Paul told him of how the sailors had warned him to watch for the flashes of light on Athena's spear and casque, and of how small they were compared with the blaze that dazzled you when the sun struck on the gold dome of the Temple in Jerusalem. From Jerusalem the Jews, who were not atheists he said, might have claimed that Jehovah looked down on all the nations of earth, but they had never done so . . . though they spoke of the hearth of God . . . for to the Jews the one god was a spirit. His habitation was not on earth. Men had built His Temple for worship only. Paul stopped. He saw that his companion was not interested.

"What were you doing in Macedonia if you love Jeru-

salem so much," the man asked. And Paul explained his mission, and how he had preached in Salonica and Beroea.

"And now you come here? Odd I never heard of you in Salonica. But I see few Jews. It's a new religion, is it? No? Well, a form of Judaism, then? You'll do no good here, you know," he ended, with a smile. "The Athenians will listen, but they pay no attention to anything that comes from outside Attica."

"I shall go on to Corinth," Paul said.

"You'd have more chance there. Corinth is commercial, and everyone is a pusher." The Corinthians, the Macedonian went on, were proud of being up to date. They thought no other State could surpass them. There was much discussion going on about beginning again to cut the canal through the isthmus between the two seas. Some people were afraid that the southern sea was lower in level, and that the island of Ægina would be overwhelmed if the canal let the waters of the Corinthian Gulf through. Though they cared for little but money-making, the Corinthians were easier to get on with than Athenians.

"They are quite uncultured, but except about their commercial success, they don't give themselves airs, as the Athenians do." The Roman occupation, the man continued, was a gift of the gods to Attica, if the Athenians only knew it.

"But even the Romans haven't gingered them up! Athens has always admired herself too much to see the truth. We of the other States knew a generation ago

that we were conquered, but the Athenians haven't found it out yet! They think they lead the world, when they have forgotten what freedom is. Augustus was a fox. He flattered them into submission. Julius began it, but Augustus went further. . . . The Romans rule Greece by flattery. They send their sons here to get culture!"

Paul asked the names of some of the statues that they passed, and the man laughed. Did he not see that they were the gods? Had he never heard that it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man? . . . He could speak freely to Paul, he said, as he was a Jew with a new religion. Yes, he lived in Athens now but though it had been entertaining at first to see so many religious processions, he was tired of ritual.

"It's only philosophers who can say what they like here. I am tired of the gods. If the Athenians are effeminate . . . well, I say it is your ear . . . Athena, after all, was a woman. Some men say she sprang with a shout from the head of Zeus. Others declare that Zeus swallowed her mother, Metis, his first wife, and then gave birth to the child through his head! I haven't enough reverence to swallow all these tales. They may have hidden meanings, but men in the street can't work them out. . . . Athena, young and strong and serene . . . thought and intelligence . . . out of the head of Zeus. That's all right, but how many of those people we saw rush to the Temple think of her like that? They say that she and Poseidon fought for Attica, but though she won, they propitiate him, too, when they are close to the sea! To-morrow you'll go to the Hill of Ares . . . all travel-

lers do. The gods tried him for murder there. He had killed his daughter's lover, Poseidon's son. I forget what happened. . . . Our gods are great fighters. . . . Socrates died for the right to disbelieve in them, and I don't wonder. . . ."

The man talked on, and Paul listened. He didn't agree with half he heard but he had learnt self-control. He now waited until a man had talked himself out before he spoke of the new Gospel. As a rule he introduced it by speaking in public in the markets. It was easier to talk to men in the mass. The Macedonian dropped the Greek gods, and began to talk of the Romans.

"I admire them, even now in their limitations. They used to have freedom, but they gave it up for Empire. We Greeks could never make an Empire. I wonder why? I suppose we're too keen on other things. You want a single mind if you set out to conquer the world. . . . The Romans have that. They don't care what you worship, provided the State has recognised it. . . . Their religion is Law and Order. Augustus had himself worshipped as a god. That was another good dodge of his. Altars are cheaper than men's wages and accoutrements. He saved police charges. He didn't do it inside Italy . . . too many people to laugh at him there!"

"It's too wicked to laugh at," Paul declared, and the man stared at him.

"But it's only political. Why shouldn't one honour the head of the State?"

Paul shook his head, but did not reply. His companion went on talking. Curious how many Greeks and Romans

spoke with contempt of their gods. But it only confirmed all Paul's ideas about the dying creeds of Rome and Greece. The impulse that had driven him here had come from God. You must act on such urgings. Then you found out from whence they came.

When they reached the Piræus Gate the seven-mile walk had seemed short to Paul, with such a companion. They paused near the statue of Poseidon on horseback.

"He still has some influence here, you see. But the gods must hold together," the man said, his eyebrows twitching. Then he told Paul where he could find a cheap lodging (Paul meant to wait for Timothy before he introduced himself to the Jews). They might meet again. After all, Athens was a small city. . . . Paul thanked the Macedonian for his help, and they parted. . . . A cultivated man with a mocking tongue who used odd phrases, Paul thought, as he walked away alone. He was accustomed now to making friends and losing them at once. Some day, perhaps, in a better life, he would meet them again.

Next morning, when Paul had washed and eaten, he went out to see Athens. In the evening he would meet Timothy, and they would deliver their letters to the Jews in the City, but for the moment as he was alone, he wanted to take in the feeling of the place of which he had heard so much. It was a small city, Paul found, badly laid out with insignificant houses. But no matter how the poor lived, the gods were well housed. The only magnificent buildings were the Temples that towered above the mean streets. Perfect though some of these

were, after the size of the Roman arenas and theatres in Asia, at Antioch and in Cilicia, Paul, when he got closer to them . . . was astonished at their smallness. He was more astonished at their number. He got confused as he wandered about. There was the unfinished Temple to Olympian Zeus . . . could there be another Zeus? . . . near the river. It had been planned on a great scale, but it stood there, neglected, with the tall fluted pillars of its portico like a grove of forgotten trees. There was a Temple to Ares, and one to Hercules and Theseus. But they had been men. There was another to the mother of the gods. Then they had had a mother? And there were all those Temples above, on the Acropolis. Everywhere down here on the level were altars and statues. Paul gave up trying to distinguish them as he wandered at random. Their number was too vast to count. He walked round the eight-sided Tower of the Winds . . . was it a Temple or a tower or a clock? . . . and stopped to stare at the reliefs high up on the sides. Boreas . . . another god to be worshipped . . . flying level across his slab, in short petticoats and boots, with a beard on his face. The other winds . . . were they gods too? One had a brazier. He must be a winter wind. The capitals of the pillars were similar to those of the vestibule of the southern entrance to the Temple at Jerusalem. Herod had been fond of acanthus. Paul went through one of the postern gates into the Agora, and walked along the colonnade under the pillars which again reminded him of Herod. How long ago it seemed since he had sat with Barnabas under Herod's colonnade at Antioch! But

that colonnade was plain and of beautiful proportions, not like this, cluttered up with statues of gods and heroes innumerable. The shops and warehouses behind the pillars were small. Was the Agora of Athens meant for a market or for a store-house of gods? After all, men must buy and sell somewhere, but in Athens the life of the gods dominated the ordinary daily life of the citizens.

The Agora lay in the valley between the Acropolis and the Areopagus, and Paul left it to climb to the Acropolis. The square craggy rock on which the Temples stood was only about one hundred and fifty feet high. Workmen were building a flight of new steps that would lead straight up to the gate, but it was not finished, so Paul went by the old way. It was a short climb. The Temple hill in Jerusalem was twice as high. Paul paused outside to look at the great entrances of white marble. Yes, they were certainly fine. Then he went in by one of the bronze doors, past the two statues of soldiers on horseback . . . he didn't know who they were . . . and followed the corridor out to the open space beyond. In front of him was a statue. He recognised it at once. It was the Athena that the sailors had pointed out from the ship. Athena the Fighter at the front with the casque and spear, Athena the Champion, seventy-feet high, holding her oval shield and looking west right over the loftiest roofs of the Acropolis, over the Pnyx and the Agora away to the Ægean Sea. Paul walked round the statue. It was too big. The casque alone must be the size of a man, but so high up on the top of the pedestal you couldn't realise it. The height and mass were meant to impress on the mind

that the statue represented a goddess, but in truth it was imposing in these qualities only. How stupid to try to indicate divinity by size and number! Paul looked round. This place, too, was full of statues. Were they all of gods? The Temple on the right must be the Parthenon. He crossed over, keeping carefully to the paths other men walked on, for though he saw no inscription like that on the beautiful Gate of the Inner Court of the Temple in Jerusalem, threatening a foreigner with death if he entered, he did not want to be recognised as an alien, and some ground was sure to be sacred. He stopped at the bottom of the steps and looked up. It was the usual Temple of Greek and Roman Asia, with a broad flight of stairs up to a pillared portico, and great doors set in the dim wall behind. But this was more ornate. The bare walls did not show for the roof sloped down to rows of pillars on either side which made a colonnade round the Temple. Under the parapet of the great slope of the front some sort of a battle was going on . . . the virago Athena triumphant over her foes? Here, too, were gold shields of warriors, with inscriptions over them. Paul walked round outside the Temple. Above the fluted pillars of the colonnades, divided at intervals by smaller flutings, ran a frieze of sculptured figures. He could not guess what they were doing and the gay colours painted on the faces and robes of the figures destroyed he thought, the texture of the stone and annoyed him. He paused to look at a horse with a man's body rising out of it . . . could the Greeks still believe in the Centaur? He had often on distant hills seen what looked like a herd of

centaurs. . . . But it was only cattle feeding. If a beast raised its head it seemed that a man rose out of its shoulders. The Greeks had always been unnatural. He was back at the same front again. He went up the steps, and this time walked round inside the colonnade. High up on the windowless wall there was another row of figures. What did these chariots with prancing horses, these led cattle, these women walking and men riding, and these robed seated figures mean? The horses were almost alive. It was a religious procession, of course. They were leading the beasts to slaughter. The Athenians still appeased their gods with the blood of beasts. They did not know that sacrifice had been done away with, but he had come to tell them. The idea of a god who came to earth to sacrifice himself would be new to them.

Paul had gone round the Temple twice, staring at the two rows of figures, when he found himself at the entrance. He walked up the steps into the outer portico, and pushing open a door, peered into the dark interior. Inside in the dimness he saw a statue rise shining in ivory and gold. Another Athena? Paul had heard of her too. She was thirty feet high, the sailors had said, and covered with gold. He turned and walked down the steps. If he went inside he must offer some allegiance. He must not do that. Athena was nothing to him. He turned back to the other Temple, the Erechtheum, which stood near the great statue. On one side a row of tall stone women held a portico roof on their heads. Were they goddesses too? Impossible! The Greek gods were haughty. No Greek sculptor dare carve a god

who served. They must be meant for the servants of the gods inside . . . perhaps they were foreign goddesses of conquered countries of which he had never heard?

Everywhere there were statutes . . . statues and statues and still more statues. . . . How many Athenas were there? With a sudden quick curiosity, Paul began to count them. There was Athena the Virgin, the protectress of the State, Athena the weaver of cloth, Athena the fighter at the front. . . . The Greeks sheltered behind the skirts of a woman goddess. . . . She had fought the God of War and beaten him at his own game. There was Athena the giver of victory, and last there was an old wooden image inside the Erechtheum Temple before whom Paul, when he had glanced in, had seen a woman worshipper bow sobbing. Another Athena? And all the owls and serpents and cocks and olive trees. . . . What had they to do with the goddess? Were there a dozen Athenas, or were they all meant to be aspects of one deity?

Paul, tired with sight-seeing, went outside the Entrances and sat down at the side of the old approach. Below him the workmen cutting the hillside worked at the new stairway. The steps far down at the bottom were already finished. Did the Athenians always start new work before they finished the old? Inside, behind him, one side of the great Entrances was still incomplete. He had seen on the stones the roughly blocked out handles by which they had been lifted into place. The masons had forgotten to chisel them off. But perhaps the Romans were doing

the steps. The Athenians were no longer responsible for their own city. Their time was over.

Athens made you think. Part of it was beautiful. But if the men who had built the Temples had had a glimmering of knowledge of God, they had been unable to communicate it. For no man wandering round the Acropolis would guess His true nature. No Athenian sculptor, however great, had suggested it. All these figures with arms and legs, walking and sitting, clothed and unclothed, distracted your attention from God. God might be everything that encompassed us round, all land and sea, the universe and the whole nature of the world, but to imagine that man could express in stone and wood, or even in ivory and gold, any true idea of Him, was a crass imagination for an intellectual race. What man with understanding would try to make an image of Deity? Men might set aside sacred ground. They might build shrines to help in their worship. . . . But let no man think that in making an image of a body he made God real. That was blasphemy. God was greater when left to the mind.

The truth was the Athenians were afraid of the gods. They thought of them as they thought of men. They were larger and more powerful men and women, but full of human whims, cruel and capricious. Naturally they must propitiate them. It had never dawned on a Greek mind that God was of a different nature. They never imagined a God like the God of the Jews, stern it might be, but justice itself, who loved His creatures. The empty Holy of Holies which no man but the High Priest ever entered,

and where only incense was burnt as an offering, was a conception that Gentiles could not grasp. Pompey the Roman had broken into it, and had been shocked to see the bareness, thinking it dishonoured God. But how else could the idea of God who is a spirit be expressed except by bareness and nothingness? . . . Was it the fault of the Greeks that no revelation had been given them? Of course it was. If you pushed the spiritual life far from you, and concerned yourself only with the life of the body you became deaf to God's voice. . . . Paul's heart sank. There was a gulf between the two conceptions of life. How could his new revelation sweep away the gods that the Greeks had piled . . . god upon god all over the world? The job was too big for him. What was his will against the organised hierarchies of priests who owned such Temples? He was only a small, bandy-legged David standing up to fight the proud giants. Discouraged, he rose. He must go back to his lodgings and eat before he met Timothy. He paused for a moment, and his eyes wandered over the wide view, across the lower city to the plain and the sea beyond. He had seen many and wider views in his life. His discouragement was so heavy upon him that the beauty and interest meant nothing to him. Why had the workmen on the steps stopped work? They were leaning on their mattocks as if listening. As the thought flashed through Paul's mind a dreadful din that rose from the city below reached his ears too. He could hear the clash of cymbals and the shrill sound of pipes above the dull beat of tambourines. A horn began to drone harshly making a worse noise than all the other

racket. Paul turned to fly. He hated these heathen processions in honour of false gods. If it was coming up to the Acropolis he would meet it if he didn't hurry. He could see a line of bobbing heads below, and here and there the shrouded point of a thyrsus held high, but wobbly in the air. . . . It was coming up. If it were to Bacchus, most of his followers would be drunk. . . . Surely Bacchus, too, was worshipped in the Erechtheum with the other gods?

Half-way down the steps Paul turned aside just in time to avoid the procession, and found himself in a quiet spot away from the main stairs, where in a corner a few cypress trees stood round a small altar. In the distance that horrible noise from the worshippers of Bacchus rose higher and higher as the procession advanced to the Entrances. Paul sat down on the rough wall of stone that protected the altar. It was a peaceful place. How pleasant the smell of pine trees was. There were no statues, and the altar was of plain stone without ornament. It was evidently old for on the back was a discoloured marble slab with a Greek inscription in half-obliterated letters. Paul leant forward to read it. With some difficulty he spelt out the letters TO GODS UNKNOWN. He read them twice over. What did they mean? What was the object of the altar? Had it been built to appease gods who might feel neglected, or was it to alien gods whom the Greeks did not know, but whom they feared? He sat and stared at it. Somehow it moved him deeply. No! It was not there, he felt, for appeasement or courtesy, or even for fear. Someone who

felt as he did had built that altar. . . . The very look of the bare stone recalled Jerusalem. The great wall of the Temple was built of clean naked stone like that. No building in Athens had that austere beauty and massive bareness.

All at once Paul was overwhelmed by homesickness. He had never been happy in Jerusalem, he told himself, but nevertheless the freedom of the Temple was his birthright. He was not alone there, as he was here. He knew the background of men's minds. They had shared their childhoods, and no man could ever get away from that!

Jerusalem stood higher than the hills around it. Its towers and walls stood out against the sky, and not against the hills. . . . The lower court of the Temple was built on a magnificent terrace. The inner court was raised on its platform in the centre of the lower court. The Temple itself rose out of these, still more magnificent. And Antonia towered far above every other building in the city, its keep towering still higher above it. There was nothing on the Acropolis to compare with the Temple. Why, if you took up the Parthenon and set it down in the cloisters in Jerusalem it would only block their centre aisle. If all the buildings on the Acropolis were put into the Temple they would be lost there.

Paul had become a Jew again. His soul rallied. The Greeks had always been despised by the disciples of Moses. . . . This job was not of his seeking. God had thrust it upon him, and he must be faithful. He would do what the inner voice commanded, abandoning himself

again and again to its guidance. The end was not in his keeping. . . . It was time to meet Timothy.

They met at the Piraean Gate. Timothy was not as tired as Paul had expected him to be. Someone had given him a lift on a cart. They went at once to see the Jews to whom they had letters. The Jews were not sympathetic. They had no power in the city, so there was no question of driving Paul out. But they were not interested. There was something in Athens that worried Paul. And then in a few days there came letters from Salonica. Someone must go back. Paul decided to send Timothy. They could meet again at Corinth. Timothy must rejoin him there with Luke and Silas. He himself would wait at Athens for a letter confirming this arrangement. So poor Timothy, so lately disembarked, had to face the sea again, and Paul was left alone in Athens.

XVI

TIMOTHY had gone, and Paul had never felt so lonely in his life. He had no money and would have none until Silas and Timothy rejoined him. Their friends in Salonica were to send it. He worked at his trade and saw the men to whom he sold his work, but he had little in common with them. He hated a life without friends.

He could get no hold on Athens. When he spoke in public the Athenians listened and, their curiosity gratified, went their way. When he preached in the synagogue he found no satisfaction there either. The Jews were subdued. They listened with indifference. What he said had no significance. It might or might not be true. What did it matter? They would not have denounced him. Paul felt, even had they objected to the new revelation, for they had lost all religious fervour. In a city where every god ever invented by the human mind had a place, the Jews had learnt tolerance. The ardour which in Roman Asia made them fight for their creeds would seem slightly ridiculous in Athens. Cultured people did not fight for such things.

Paul felt he was getting old. For years now he had gone from place to place, handed on from one set of dis-

ciples to another, parting with people once unknown, whom he had grown to love, leaving towns which once he had never seen, but into which, like a dog that turns round and round to make his bed comfortable, he had gradually fitted. . . . New men and women, new roads, new cities, new rooms, new beds . . . he had spent his life adapting himself to new conditions, and he began to long for a settled life with a steady job and a home where he could teach his chosen followers and talk to familiar friends. But though he dwelt on this imagination, he knew it was an impossible dream. That inner necessity to spread his gospel would compel him to move on. He could never have the comfort of habit. Life was like a long white road that stretched before him, mile beyond mile, every painful inch of which had to be walked over by his tired feet. But God's will must be carried out. Death would bring rest.

It was in the Agora that the discussion began which Paul afterwards saw had changed the bent of his mind and given him a new understanding of his revelation. He had ceased to preach in the streets, as he found the Athenians so unimpressed, but each day when he had finished his work he went out and wandered round Athens. Sometimes when he saw men talking, as they did at street corners or in the market-place or on the Areopagus, he stopped to listen. Sometimes he joined in the talk. On this day he had watched the potters at work at their end of the Agora, and when he got tired of that he had gone to the other end of the market where the citizens had a habit of gathering to discuss. There was a group of men there

with a circle of listeners. Paul heard no laughter. Perhaps they were talking of things that mattered? He went nearer, and pushed into the ring of spectators. The talkers were all young, and as Paul had surmised, they were taking their discussion more seriously than mature Athenians would have done.

A small man with a big head was speaking. He had thrown aside his hat, and Paul thought that his head, with the beard not yet hardened but fluffy with youth, was like the head of Boreas which he had seen on the relief outside the Temple of the winds.

"I don't believe that the stars influence our lives," he said dogmatically. He spoke with the clear accent of the Athenian.

"Why not?" asked another youth. This boy, who was tall, with long hair and a bare face, had, Paul noticed, the bridgeless nose straight from the forehead that the Greeks thought beautiful, but which he himself accustomed to the bold-hooked noses of Judea, considered effeminate.

"Why not?" Boreas repeated scornfully. "Because no reasonable man could believe in a sublime science that unveils futurity."

"I don't say that they bother about ordinary men. Only that they may influence great men and princes," the youth persisted.

"How can you think that, Demas, when you know we know nothing about them?" Boreas protested. "Why, we don't even know if they move!"

"But we see them move," another lad put in.

Boreas turned on him: "How do you know they move?" he challenged.

"By my eyes," the other retorted.

"Do you believe everything your eyes tell you?"

"Rather my eyes than my imagination," the lad replied. He was a boy with blunt features and a mop of red hair thrown back from his forehead, evidently not an Athenian.

"Then you differ from Plato. He thought more of the imagination!" Boreas exclaimed.

"Well, Ptolemy says that they move," the red-haired lad said doggedly.

"And Pythagoras says that it is the earth that rotates and turns round in every twenty-four hours. No two philosophers agree. Whom are we to believe?"

"But surely the earth is fixed," the beautiful youth called Demas submitted.

"Who told you that?" the young man with the beard demanded.

"Aristotle said we were the centre of the universe.
..."

"Aristotle suggested that because the moon always shows us the same face; . . . and anyhow he didn't know everything. If we travel round the sun, our movement may make the stars seem to move. But that doesn't say the earth is the centre. We may be of no importance.
..."

But at this Paul broke in.

"Of course your Aristotle is right," he said. "We must be the centre of the universe." They all turned to Paul,

exactly as if he had suddenly caught the ball in a game.

"Why do you say 'our Aristotle'?" the young man with the big head inquired.

"I am a Jew," Paul replied.

"I can hear that for myself," the young man rejoined and somebody laughed.

Paul did not mind. He was interested now and he was accustomed to comments on his bad Greek accent.

"Aristotle belongs to the world," the tall young man put in, and Boreas lifting his eyebrows, asked:

"So you think we are the centre of the universe and that the stars are bound up with our lives?"

Paul shook his head.

"I didn't say that. We Jews have never found God in the stars. . . ."

"Where do you find them?" Boreas interrupted.

"In our daily life," Paul returned.

The young man smiled. Then he waved his hand towards the strip of sky grey with heat, that showed under the roof of the colonnade.

"Regard the skies. How great they are! Why do you think we are the centre of all that?"

"Because God cares for us. Because He created the earth as the stage for our salvation and sent His Messenger here to reveal it," Paul replied. These clever young men quickened his mind.

"You think that the gods come to earth to interfere and look after us?" the young man asked curiously.

"Why not?" Paul answered.

"Why not?" Boreas echoed. "Isn't it putting and undue value on ourselves?"

"Not on us. On God. There is only one God," Paul replied.

"I always heard in Rome that Jews have stubborn superstitions. But I never met one before," the red-haired lad said thoughtfully, and Paul exclaimed:

"Other races know nothing of the gods they worship. We do, and that is why salvation has come through the Jews."

"What cheek!" a voice murmured, and Boreas waving for silence, demanded:

"What is salvation?"

"Freedom from sin and life after death," Paul replied.

"You are sure you will have that?"

"I am sure," Paul said, and this time they all laughed.

"Hist! I want to know what he means." Boreas again waved for silence. "Why are you sure you live after death? Are you the Messenger?"

"No. But I had a revelation," Paul answered.

"You were inspired?" Boreas asked. "How do you know it was inspiration?"

"When God possesses you, hesitation and doubt are impossible."

Perhaps they were mocking him, Paul thought, but what did it matter? They were clever and if he were given time he could convince them.

"Would you care to tell us this revelation?" Boreas put the question in a dignified voice and his companions all laughed again.

"It's too hot," a voice in the crowd grumbled.

"I wonder at you." Boreas rebuked the speaker. "He says he is inspired and can reveal a life after death, and you talk of the weather! We must hear this revelation."

"Jews are always prating about something," the voice replied. Paul could not see the speaker.

"Let's go up to the Areopagus," Demas suggested, "it will be cool there and we can listen in comfort. Inspirations are sometimes amusing."

Boreas turned to Paul.

"Will you come and tell us yours?"

For a moment Paul hesitated. He looked round at the faces, all young but without experience, and so, he felt, pitiable. They were playing with great things. What could they know about life?

"I will tell," he said.

Taking Paul, they climbed by the north staircase cut in the rock to the level platform where, just above the noise and heat of the Agora, the booksellers kept their stalls. People were coming and going and the platform with the rock behind it was hot.

"We'll go higher up where there will be a breeze," Boreas decided, and they climbed to the top.

Here the stone seats in the quadrangle where the Court sat to judge were empty except for one old man who sat, his eyes half shut, facing the view spread before him right to the sea. Paul stood to look round at it, too. The cultivated fields and olive groves lay close to Athens, and beyond lines of green marked the course of the three rivers. On one side were salt marshes and blue sea, and

to the south more sea with white waves breaking on the yellow sand of a curving bay. Was the old man dreaming or dozing? He had looked up with a courteous gesture of welcome and then relapsed into himself again.

Close to Paul two stone blocks faced each other and he sat down on one of them. Demas ran forward and caught him by the sleeve.

"You need not sit on the criminal's block," he said, and everybody laughed. When Paul rose and crossed to sit on the other block, they all laughed much louder.

"But don't sit on the judge's seat either," Boreas exclaimed.

The laughter seemed to wake the old man up. He was very old. His skin was yellow and stretched so tightly over the bones of his face that all the wrinkles had been smoothed out of it. His teeth had gone but his flexible lips had not fallen in, and he watched the group with eyes which, though sunk in his head, were alive and young.

Paul turned to him with a question on his lips, but there was no need to ask it, for the old man made a gesture of invitation towards the bench on which he sat.

"Why not?" he asked, and Paul sat down beside him.

"He's going to tell us why we are the centre of the universe," Boreas explained.

"Indeed!" the old man said. He looked at Paul and then his keen bright eyes wandered round the group of young faces. . . .

"He is a Jew, and sure of everything. He says we live after death," Boreas went on.

"Indeed!" the old man repeated. "And you?" he added courteously. "You are not sure of anything?"

"What thinker is?" the young man replied.

The old man's sandals, Paul noticed, were carefully mended, and his clothes though threadbare had been washed white and clean. It was obvious that if he himself had lost all regard for the outside of life, someone cared for him.

"You doubt if we live after death?" the old man inquired.

Boreas shook his head. "I don't doubt. Death is the end," he declared emphatically.

The old man said nothing more. A faint smile dawned in his eyes, but it did not reach his lips. His lids half closed and he turned away. Courtesy and interest in other people were evidently part of his soul, but it seemed to Paul that he preferred dreaming to talk. . . . Did these boys really believe that death ended all, or was it only a pose of immaturity?

The youths had settled themselves on the benches near Paul, and Demas said:

"Now we are all comfortable. Will you begin?"

For a moment Paul was discomfited. How self-confident they all were! Then he pulled himself together.

"Where do you want to begin?" he asked. And Boreas said:

"I'd like to know first why you want to live after death."

Paul stared. What could this impudent youth know of

life or its depths? How could he measure a man's passion to live?

"Do you want to die as the beasts die?" he broke out, "To be insensate . . . to see no more? Why, the desire for immortal life is the root of all desire!"

"But desire is a sign of infirmity. 'He has the most who desires the least,' " Boreas quoted, and Paul replied:

"My religion tells me that all we have ever desired or deserved will be given us."

"As simple as that?" the little man with the big head mocked.

"As simple as that," Paul replied.

"You soon get sick of desire . . . once it's gratified," a voice interrupted.

Paul turned to look at the speaker. It was the man who had spoken of prating Jews and complained of the heat. He was a year or two older than the others. An elderly boy with heavy fatigue lines under his eyes and a muddy skin.

"Not my sort of desire," Paul said. And the boy retorted:

"Oh, don't begin to talk of morals! That's the worst of you Jews and your great Law. You reduce everything to morality and rules. How can there be beauty if men never break free?"

"I don't want to talk of morals . . . though that may be part . . ." Paul replied.

"It tires me. What on earth do you want with more life? The universe is too big. We are lost in it," the other complained.

"We are part of it. How can we be lost in what we belong to?" Paul demanded.

"But that's not your revelation. We came up here to hear of it," Demas protested.

"Yes," Paul agreed, "I came to talk of incarnation. I want to prove that we are spirits in bodies."

"That's not new. You didn't need an inspiration to attempt that," Boreas interrupted, and the beautiful young man put in:

"Pythagoras said long ago that souls existed before bodies, and will exist after they have left the body!"

"I don't agree with Pythagoras. He had not our experience," Boreas remarked calmly. "It is more likely that the soul is only a function of the body . . . a sort of attunement, as Plato said."

"But Plato didn't believe that!" Demas remonstrated.

"He said it, anyhow . . ." the tired man attested casually.

"When the body dies, the music ceases," Boreas pronounced.

"But the body is the instrument!" Paul, annoyed at the finality in his tone, objected strongly.

Boreas smiled.

"Where, then, is the player? I always ask men who think we live after death to tell me what the soul is made of. What substance has it, and where does it keep its thoughts? How does it see and hear and touch? For if it can't do these, what use is it to us?"

"But the body and soul are different. Each has its own faculties," Paul exclaimed.

"Well, then, you who are so sure of everything, can you tell us where we shall live after death? What sort of houses shall we have? And where in the universe is there room for the vast multitudes of men who have lived and died during all the ages?"

"You are thinking in terms of body," Paul insisted. "Why should we imagine that the soul needs space? It is a mystery. We cannot understand."

"I suppose you think it is not lawful to speak of the sacred mysteries?" the gloomy boy suggested.

"No. We Jews have no mysteries. Every man can learn. I am trying to tell you that we have a divine philosophy which God reveals to us through the spirit. Our poets have said it better than I can. Listen." Paul began to translate, hesitating as he searched for words.

"Our spirits vanish as the soft air.

Our life is dispersed as a mist that is driven away by the beams of the sun or overcome with the heat.

After our end there is no returning.

It is fast sealed so that no man cometh again.

But God made not death. Neither hath He any pleasure in the destruction of the living.

The souls of the righteous are in His hands and there shall no torment touch them.

In the sight of the unwise they seem to die.

Their departure is taken for misery and their going for utter destruction.

But they are in peace.

Though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality."

There was silence for a moment and then Boreas burst out:

"It is downright madness to hope for more life! It is only vanity that makes us think we are immortal. Vanity

imagines transmigration of the soul, or life after death. Both are lies! After death there is no sensation left in either body or soul. In our last day we all return to what we were before our birth. To nothingness!"

"But if that is true," Paul cried, "where do I find my hope? It is not in my own mind. I look beyond my mind to a higher law."

"Imagination," the tired boy said.

"But why do we imagine that sense things are imperfect? We do not start with this idea. Life brings this feeling of imperfection. How can we imagine something that puts us in mind of what we don't know . . . that goes beyond our grasp . . . that tells us that the things we see out of the tail of our eyes are the only important things."

Paul stopped, stammering. They were all smiling.

"Can imagination tell me that we are formed not out of dust alone, but of the Divine Spirit also?" he asked indignantly. And Boreas answered:

"Your imagination tells you that. Mine tells me that after death we shall be absorbed into that same spirit."

"And cease to be individually?" Paul demanded.

Boreas nodded.

"I hold one theory of the universe and you another. Your religion assures you that the shades below have sensation. Mine that all ends at death. Which is right?"

"I am," Paul declared. His audience was grinning with delight.

"We know nothing of such things," Boreas said.

"Some Greeks, too, are ready to offer divine honours and

make deities of heroes who have just ceased to be men. You and they are alike deceived.

"When God reveals Himself we know," Paul replied. "Inspiration . . . that sudden illumination that makes everything clear is its own proof. The thoughts that are then given you are inevitable. You cannot change them if you would."

"Men invent these fancies to please themselves," the tired boy said in an indifferent tone.

"To please themselves. . . ." Paul repeated and looked round the circle of unlined young faces so inexperienced and unbroken by life. Then he laughed bitterly.

"You think I invented my revelation. But what motive could I have had? How have I pleased myself? Since I have been forced to preach it. I have had no home. My journeys have been unending. I have been through dangers from rivers, dangers in towns, dangers from you Gentiles, dangers from my own people, dangers on land and on the sea. I have been hungry and thirsty and sleepless. I have been cold and naked. I have been stoned. I have been shipwrecked. I have been flogged . . ." Paul stopped, unable to go on.

"Is it wise to boast of being flogged? Only slaves are beaten," Boreas remarked.

"I am not a slave. I am a Roman citizen," Paul protested. "If I boast it is to prove how I suffer to proclaim the truth. At first I hated and resisted inspiration. But I had to accept it."

"You don't look mad," the Greek rejoined unmoved.

"I am not mad," Paul replied curtly.

"I am a Roman citizen, too," the red-headed boy declared. "Do you think your adventures give you more right to instruct the intelligent?" The lad was not mocking as the others were, and Paul answered him straightly.

"If I know something that other men do not, I must tell it. Inspiration is not imagination. It is a fact. I have told you that a proof has been given me that we live eternally. . . ."

Boreas slapped himself on the knee emphatically.

"We have forgotten all about his special revelation. Let us have it now. I am not interested in floggings," he said.

"Will you listen?" Paul asked.

"Of course we'll listen if it isn't too boring," Boreas replied, and they all settled themselves again comfortably.

"It is about an incarnation," Paul began. He had recovered his self-control. Perhaps even now he could make them understand.

"You are going to tell us a tale of the gods? I warn you that the only incarnation I am interested in is my own," Demas interrupted lightly.

"My story may prove that," Paul retorted.

The group that sat watching him reminded him of another group he had seen in his youth in Tarsus. A crowd stood round a dog that on its hind legs danced slowly and painfully to the sound of pipes played by its Syrian master. In each young man, even in the Roman, Paul saw the same aloof interest, the same alien admiration that the Tarsian crowd had shown, as if their common thought was "How wonderful what these animals

can do!" But if he caught their attention, what matter if they looked on him as a performing dog?

So Paul told them the story of Jesus and his life and death and resurrection. He had told it now year after year for almost twenty years, to audience after audience, in country after country, and it moved him still. It was a miracle tale, a fairy tale, a tale of the djinn. But it had something no Greek or Arabian tale ever had. For it was a story of the highest stooping to help the lowest, of a God who had bound himself by his own pain to save the meanest of men. It was a wonderful tale. To think that the greatest had come to help the weakest made pain and loneliness easy to bear, and soothed and rested. As Paul told it he forgot his audience. He ceased to consider whether he could catch the attention of clever young men. For the tale always opened to him endless vistas of possible relationships with the unseen. His working imagination brought God near.

Suddenly he heard a sound, and looked up. Somebody had moved restlessly on the stone bench opposite. It was Boreas. He was yawning.

Paul stopped abruptly.

"It's only more gods and we are tired of gods," Boreas explained.

"I have spoken of one God only," Paul said. They were bored, actually bored.

"But there is this Jesus who was crucified and the other. Is that a god or a goddess?" the red-haired boy demanded.

"What other?" Paul asked.

"You haven't understood, Rufus. Jesus is his local God," Boreas explained.

"But who is Resurrection, then? Is it a god or a goddess?"

Boreas laughed aloud.

"Neither. Resurrection is what happened to his local God."

"But he didn't say that."

"No. He said that corpses walked," Boreas replied.

"I know my Greek is bad," Paul intervened, forcing himself to have patience. "Let me explain."

"But you have been explaining and explaining, and haven't proved anything yet," Boreas said.

"He is too much moved by his own story. Emotion proves nothing," the tired young man criticised, and Paul turned on him.

"When the Spirit of God sweeps the critical intellect away you know that emotion is the only guide to insight."

"Are you now praising passion?" Boreas asked, with lifted eyebrows.

"No," Paul replied coldly. "We Jews believe that God has assigned the chief position in the body to the head. It is only in modern Greece that we learn it belongs to the pudenda."

The boys all laughed aloud.

"One for you," Rufus said, and the tired youth put in languidly:

"I told you the Jews mixed their gods up with their morals!"

"What a success that man will have who preaches

there are no gods!" Boreas exclaimed, and at that they all laughed again, except the red-haired youth, who frowning, asked:

"Did he say that this Jesus was a God?"

"Yes. He peddles foreign gods," the tired boy answered before Paul could reply.

"His great inspiration narrows down into corpses walking," Demas declared flippantly, and Paul demanded indignantly:

"Why should it seem incredible to you that God should raise the dead."

"Have you ever seen a corpse . . . walking or not?" Boreas, smiling, asked.

Paul shut his eyes. He suddenly saw his mother. The folded hands . . . the thin sharp nose. There was no life left there. But that was a half-truth only. If men judged by appearance, they would never know truth. He opened his eyes.

"It is like a seed," he said. "God has ordained that the body must die if the spirit is to live."

"Your gods again!" Boreas retorted. "You don't seem to have grasped my excellent principle . . . that we know nothing of the gods, either of their existence or their natures or of the names which they give themselves."

Paul did not answer. His passion withered before the mockery of this cynical youth. Was earnestness obnoxious to all cultivated Greeks?

"In any case, the gods take no interest in us. They are too much occupied with games of their own." The tired

boy rose. "I was always told when I was a boy that happiness came by keeping out of mischief and that peace of mind was everything. But they told me these tales of the gods, so, like them, I wanted to hurl myself at life and take what I wanted from it. I did. And now I'm too tired to want anything. . . . You have wasted my afternoon when I might have been sleeping."

As he turned to go a new voice broke in, and the boy spun round. It was the old man, and he said:

"Are young men in Athens not taught that it is a want of good manners to argue to amuse themselves, and not to discover the truth?"

There was a silence. He was evidently one whom they had to respect. Then the tired boy said:

"His tale seemed all cooked up words and a sham. . . . The gods are bored by our affairs."

"Even so, do you not know that those who come from abroad should be received in a friendly spirit?" the old man asked, and Demas answered, justifying himself and his companions.

"We listened to his revelation, sir, but he cannot reason. He begins with a preconceived notion that there are gods or only one God. To argue with him is like carrying water in a bucket full of holes."

The old man waited politely until Demas had finished, and then he said:

"You are a beautiful youth but perhaps you do not possess a looking-glass? If you do, then you have forgotten that Socrates advised his disciples to view themselves

in a mirror, so that he who saw his own good looks should not disgrace his beauty by bad manners."

There was a momentary silence, and Boreas explained, defending his friend:

"This Jew told us of his new doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and when he spoke of corpses standing up it made us laugh."

The old man cut him short:

"It was a great want of manners to bring the argument to such a pass," he said and turned to Paul. "You are a stranger and therefore having neither kindred nor friends in Athens, are to be pitied by the gods and men. You have been talking of deep and holy mysteries. Are you a follower of the divine Plato?" he asked.

"He is a Jew!" several voices cried.

"I was not asleep. I heard his story," the old man said, and Boreas replied:

"It was his story that made us laugh, sir. It was all imagination."

Paul jumped to his feet.

"It was not imagination. It was my own experience," he cried. "In my vision I saw Jesus. But these young men believe in nothing."

"They are young, and time will make them reverse most of the opinions they now hold. Wait, therefore. Do not blame their judgment of high matters," the old man urged, and Paul suddenly flared up into passion.

"They will never learn to rise to the life of the spirit until they are taught to put aside the life of the body. But all Greeks worship created things and not the Creator."

"You may be right," the old man said, "But Jews I have known have told me that by the life of the body men rise to the life of the spirit."

"That is true," Paul replied. "But we teach our young men to discipline the body. Look at the lives you Grecians live! You heard one of these young men reproach me for my morality. But what good is there in a religion without an ethic? Why, our ethic alone is proof that our creed is divine and miraculous. Who could say that Greek codes were either? Your only idea of chastity is abstinence from men!"

The old man smiled.

"The best way to train the young is to train yourself. Before you are so hard on us and threaten us, you should attempt to persuade us, to argue and convince us."

"But I tried to convince them," Paul said.

Boreas turned to the old man.

"You remember, sir, that Socrates thought he was wiser than other men in that he knew he was ignorant. He said he was inspired by the gods to teach others their ignorance. But this Jew thinks he is inspired to teach everything. And he gets so hot over his imaginations!"

"Be careful!" the old man said. "It is dangerous to say that the gods are imaginations. Imagination is the faculty by which we grow. . . . You must not despise it. We see life through the eye of the mind. Even if those eyes cannot see fairly, but must debase or glorify, they are our only guide. . . . And as for this foreigner" . . . he looked politely at Paul. . . . "who can be cool

when he is called upon to prove the existence of his gods?"

The tired young man, who had sat down again, murmured:

"If we wait for the Jew to cool this discourse will extend to great length."

The old man caught the words and turned to him.

"Is there any reason why brevity should be preferred to length? There is nobody to hurry us. It is a matter of importance to prove that there are gods and that we live after death."

"Would you have us believe in this Jesus . . . his crucified God?" Boreas demanded, and the old man replied:

"No, no! But I should not like to think that by contempt you may lose the memory of holy things, and, as Plato says, only see in a mirror dimly a world of beauty that ought to be clearly visible to the minds of all men."

He smiled at Paul and added slyly: "But even proofs addressed to lost and perverted Greeks need not be spoken in scorn."

Paul's passion flared up again, and he defended himself hotly:

"I told them calmly of my revelation. But they laugh at death. They think salvation vulgar. Their feeble minds shrink from the greatness of our destiny. What do they know of the inner life that brings proof? They fear it. They mock me because I am sure. But they, too, long for a security which they can only find in the grave. Their certainty is hopelessness."

The old man listened politely and when Paul, choked by emotion, stopped, he inquired :

"Is security a good?"

"We must be sure," Paul cried.

"Why?" the old man asked.

"We must have a certainty that we can be saved from sin and death."

The old man shook his head.

"No, no! Men are possessed by this deep and primitive longing for security. But it is bad for them to have it. Security is like virginity. There is no fertility until it is broken. When a man doubts he grows."

"Why should men doubt when we can tell them the truth?" Paul demanded, and the old man smiled.

"To tell the truth implies a mastery of the art of living that few can acquire. It is the highest of the arts. What truth can we tell that the ignorant can understand?"

"We can tell them that God is good," Paul declared passionately. "Our God is a being blessed and incorruptible. He is eternal and proceeding out of eternity. He is not like the gods of the Gentiles, who have always been lewd and lawless with unnatural lusts! Jehovah never partakes of the passions of men."

"That must make him very unsympathetic," Demas put in flippantly, and Paul keeping hold of himself, replied :

"No. He is full of goodwill to men."

"We don't all think of our gods as you do," the old man said, and Paul retorted :

"Why don't you tell the people, then? They think it."

"The multitude must worship," the old man replied. "It wouldn't do if common humanity ran away from the priests. If we tell them that Zeus is the father of gods and men and that he himself was created and had a father and a grandfather, we know that Zeus does not beget children as we do. But as he gives the power to beget we say that Athena sprang from his mind."

"But it is lies!" Paul cried.

"Is it?" the old man asked. "I should say that the name God is an expression for an experience. Expression cannot precede, but must follow experience. The people must have experience first. Wisdom is not for every man. The ecstasy of the reasoning power cannot come to all and to give equal things to unequal people is an act of the greatest injustice."

"You might try to pass on some wisdom to the people," Paul retorted. His passion had cooled. He now felt a hard desire to conquer these Greeks and bring them to their knees.

"You can't pass on wisdom to the ignorant," Boreas objected, and the old man said:

"You are wrong. Even amongst the ignorant fire may be passed from hand to hand. It is only by a personal touch that a spiritual flame is lit."

"But not to our slaves?" Boreas persisted.

"Slaves can be saved," Paul cried, and the young men laughed loudly. When the old man rebuked them again, it was smilingly.

"Wisdom is not of much use to a slave," he said. "But even a slave mind cannot remain in suspense. If it does

not believe something, action is impossible. Ignorance to the slave of the correct expression of the truths we know is unimportant, for no matter how expressed, if the gods are facts of experience, the belief in them will never die."

Boreas, who, with the other young men, had sat silent listening, questioned uneasily:

"But, sir, you don't really believe in the existence of the gods?"

"I neither deny nor affirm," the old man answered. "I feel that behind the natural world of fact is the real world. I know it is invisible to the eye, but I think it is revealed to the mind. I see in life behind every material object the shadow of the mind that made it. Beyond this show of things may not the minds that move be the minds of the gods?"

"I know Plato says so," Boreas began, but Paul interrupted:

"His revelation was imperfect, and not final. We Jews *know* that there is a spiritual order behind this show of things. Our revelation is for all time. Though no man can measure God, He is as real as what we see and touch."

"How do you prove that?" the old man asked.

"God is known by the effects He produces," Paul answered. "Our revelation solves the problems of life. You can prove it for yourself. If you follow you come into communion with God. We believe there is but one God who is our Father and the Father of all humanity."

The old man nodded.

"You mean that by observing, studying and gradually

understanding the processes of the external world, men became aware of the divinity and power of God?"

"No, I do not," Paul exclaimed. "I mean a special revelation was given by God. . . ."

"You see now, sir," Boreas remarked, "why we found it so difficult to argue with him. He declaims, but does not reason."

"How would you prove that the gods exist," the Roman boy suddenly asked the old man who replied:

"Is there any difficulty in proving it? I think I should prove it as Plato did. In the first place, the earth and the sun and the stars and the universe and the fair order of the seasons and their division into years and months are proofs of their existence."

"Even if gods exist that is no proof that we live after death," Boreas exclaimed.

The old man smiled.

"No? But do we not think first and then move? Would not that seem to prove that the soul is the source of motion? If it is so then things of the soul must be prior to things of the body. Which seems to show that the soul creates or arranges everything about us."

Paul opened his lips to object. God was the Creator. But the young men were too eager. They all wanted to speak. They seemed to reverence and admire the old man. It was the fashion of the modern world to exalt Greek philosophers, while Jewish teachers were neglected and left out.

"How do you know that the gods take any interest in

us?" the tired young man demanded. Even he, Paul saw, had waked up.

"Ah! there I cannot say, but to prove that, I, like Plato, should give love. Love will make men dare to die for their beloved. Love alone, and women as well as men. At the touch of him everyone becomes a poet, even though he had no music in him before. He whom love touches does not walk in darkness, for Eros, you know, is the father of philosophy."

Paul could bear it no longer.

"Eros is a devil, and his mother Aphrodite was a devil before him. If I could catch her I would slay her for she has destroyed many of our noblest women!" he cried.

They all turned to stare, and Boreas, shrugging his shoulders, said:

"Do you wonder, sir, that he was beaten so often?"

The old man shook his head.

"No one should venture to correct a stranger by blows."

"Are we not to defend our gods?" the tired young man asked languidly.

"Is Venus your goddess? I thought you felt she was a devil too?" Rufus exclaimed, and all the other boys laughed.

The old man addressed Paul.

"I know that the Jews are no friends of Aphrodite, and indeed, some of her doings had better be buried in silence. It is unseemly that one half of mankind should go mad in their lust of pleasure and the other half in righteous indignation of them. I agree with you that an

attempt must be made to clear away lies about high places, but quarrelling is unholy."

"I was not quarrelling. I was trying to do what you said . . . pass on a flame," Paul replied coldly, and the old man said:

"You must not try to force your plans on the world in anger lest men say you do it from love of power. It is better to smother anger by reason. Men learn wisdom by infection from noble minds."

"It was not love of power. . . . I mean . . . that is what I have been trying to do. . . ." Paul stammered.

"To infect us with your greatness?" Boreas interrupted quickly, and his friends laughed again.

Paul bit his lip. Then he said, humbly:

"Not with my greatness, but the greatness of a nobler mind . . . the mind of the Son of God, who sacrificed himself to buy us life."

"A crucified God! Why, it is impossible!" Demas cried out.

"Not even we Romans dare crucify a god," Rufus said thoughtfully, and now Paul saw that they all thought him mad. There was no common ground on which they could meet.

He made one more attempt.

"Jesus taught us self-sacrifice. He said, 'Be ready to lose your soul that you may find life. Kill your personal self and you know you are part of the universe.'"

This time the youths did not laugh. It seemed that they were puzzled. But the old man appeared to understand, for he nodded and said:

"That is true. Unless your pain is deep your wisdom is shallow. When you get to the depths you find hope." Then he rose to his feet, and Paul saw that the sun was declining.

"I should say we find worship, too. That is the emotion appropriate for old age when hope has gone."

He turned to Paul and said:

"Old age may be horrible if you get into the grip of necessity, and cannot go where you please or do what you want. But even then one can brood over the past, and see where one has failed and where one succeeded, and so come by wisdom."

"I have no time to brood," Paul cried.

"You are not yet old. You are still ardent and restless. You have much work before you, in which I wish you success."

He laid a hand on Paul's arm kindly.

"Wise I may not call you. That is a great name which belongs to Zeus alone. There may be some truth in your tale. Supreme wisdom may be supreme love. But will you forgive me if I say you make it too complex? All beautiful things are simple. Romance and glory lie behind simplicity."

He gathered his darned cloak about his thin old shoulders and smiled at Paul.

"Farewell! And if holy souls have an abiding place . . . if, as the wise affirm, great spirits survive the body, may you too one day find calm and happy weather."

The boys had risen, and the smile with which the old

man looked round at them showed his toothless gums, but lit up his eyes with a trace of friendly malice.

"To you children I say, an ounce of experience is worth a ton of conjecture."

"Would you have us believe as the multitude do?" Boreas asked indignantly.

"No, no! Cultivate the critical intellect. It is our curse, and yet our only hope. Remember that few men can see beyond their personal experience. You must plough deep into your own natures if you want knowledge."

His last glance took in Paul and the youths also. It was uncertain to whom he spoke.

"And never forget that there are two things for which every wise man has contempt . . . the fool in his devotions and the learned in his infidelities. Farewell!"

He turned and went down the hill.

For a moment there was silence. Then Demas said:

"He's a great platonist."

"He's very old-fashioned. I don't value at one farthing the talk of crabbed old men," Boreas replied. "Plato is out of date. Nobody looks at the world through the imagination nowadays. We see it as it is."

And at that Paul, with a curt gesture of farewell, followed the old man down the rocky steps.

XVII

THAT night Paul did not sleep. He was depressed, and his mind was torn and uneasy. He had made a fool of himself. He had allowed these Greeks, who represented the educated world, to dominate him. The old man had actually rebuked him . . . it came to that . . . and the young ones had been so sure of his provincial ignorance and of his lack of culture that they had made him lose self-confidence. He had felt bogged and unable to explain with the result that he had not put his case as cleverly as it could be put. But a life-time was needed to explain the Jewish culture to Greeks, and unless they knew something of it, his revelation did not hang together. For there were two threads of truth to unravel. Both started from the sin of Adam. The revelation for the Jews was based on God's contract with Abraham carried on into the new contract with Christ. The Greeks knew nothing of these promises. The revelation for them rested on the sacrifice of the Son of God to save the world. . . . If he had told them of how original sin led to death, could he have held them? He felt sin in his bones, and what you feel strongly you express well. Paul began to make up sentences. "I fail to do the good thing that I want to do, but the bad that I do not want to do,

that I habitually do. I do the bad thing not of my own will, but because of the sin that is within me."

He could have gone on: "My reason delights in God's Law of right, but my body has a different law. It fights with the right accepted by my reason and makes me a prisoner to sin. My reason serves God. My earthly nature serves sin." And then he could have told them of the deliverance through Jesus.

Paul turned on his bed. Would he never get to sleep? . . . That idea that he preached a local God was absurd. In answer he might have said that if God came to a locality He must begin by being local. He must limit Himself, for how else could He appear as a man? If some men were nearer God than others, then God must be nearer man in some places than He was in others? That was why men needed a mediator. He ought to have said all that. But they had laughed when he was moved at the story of Christ, and that had unbalanced him. Had emotion no part in their philosophy? How could philosophy explain that sense of the presence of God and that feeling of the help that came from prayer? It was impossible. Emotion did not give an explanation but it cleared the brain so that the mind saw there was something to explain. Up to now there had been no perfect explanation. The Greek writers themselves said that life was a shadow show. Men stood in front of a curtain, behind which dimly they saw great Beings work. . . . But it was worse than that! If there was no God to help man was alive in a world full of horrors. He was helpless and puny. If his own feeble will was all the strength he had to withstand

the powers of darkness, then life was a tragedy. No sensitive man could look without awe on such a sight. The good taste of the Greeks would forbid them to sneer at a drama so black . . . and yet those boys had laughed!

Paul threw off the coverlet. He gave up all hope of sleep. His racing mind was asking questions and providing answers . . . as he ought to have answered some hours earlier. He searched until he found the flints and the small smoky lamp and his tablets, and sat down to write. The only way to get peace was to put your restless thoughts into writing.

"Death? But how can we grow unless we die? Nature herself is a slave to decay. She groans in the pains of labour, creating trees and land and sea. . . . And men, too, groan inwardly, waiting for the redemption of their bodies. . . .

'You ask 'How do the dead rise, and in what body do they come?'

"You fool! The seed you sow does not quicken unless it dies. You sow not the body that will be, but a grain. God gives a body to each as He pleases. . . . The forms of life are not the same. There is one body for men, another for beasts, and another for birds, and another for fishes. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. The beauty of the heavenly is not the beauty of the earthly. There is a beauty of the sun and a beauty of the moon and a beauty of the stars . . . star differs from star in glory. So with the resurrection of the dead. Sow an earthly body, it will rise immortal; sow a disfigured

corpse, it will rise beautiful ; sow a human body, you reap a spiritual."

Paul put his tablets down. Every living thing was pushing itself into individuality . . . not beast and trees only, but man, also. The creation was growing up to the pattern God had made for it. All life existed to develop the spirit. That was God's purpose. Those lads had arid imaginations. To them experience seemed soft, a thing they could move through and mould for themselves. What did they know of the urge and energy when the Spirit seized you and, striving within, drove you, blind, towards sight and expression? If he had told them of God's plan, they would still have laughed. . . . Whose fault was that? He must think this out. He had failed again . . . as so often before. Why? Because his explanation had not been intellectual enough to catch the Greeks? They wanted . . . how had that old man put it? . . . yes, "the ecstasy of the reasoning powers." But it would not be fair if ecstasy came only through reason. God had other children who were not clever. If those boys had not been so superior and self-satisfied . . . if only he had been prepared . . . he might have told them all that and more.

As Paul sat thinking, suddenly, as if from outside, he saw himself and his own motives. He had always wanted to impress clever people. He had always desired the perfect definition. He had been hurt by those superior, self-satisfied boys because he, too, had been superior and self-satisfied. His ambitions had been shallow. . . . To influence clever people, to make the perfect definition

were both alike futile. He had forgotten that beyond the things you could define there lay always those that could never be expressed. The most powerful of these unseen things was love.

With his recognition of his failure and its cause a weight fell from Paul's mind. Conceit had misled him. He had discussed these things, and left out the knowledge of most importance . . . how to find God. That did not come by the mind. No powers of the intellect were great enough to discover God. Its narrow and meagre life would not admit the passion that could change men's thoughts.

But God did choose some men in this world to express Him. If that high destiny came to you, you must accept the consequences. It meant the loneliness of living by light that most men never saw. It meant a twist in your mind, always trying to see why other men desired, and to understand the value they put on things to you valueless. How else could you explain them to themselves? And to prove that God loved, you must have a passion for your fellow-creatures that so possessed you that with your whole being you longed to be their sacrifice. For men in this world were God's hands and feet, and their love was God's love. His emotion spoke through them. The mob could not express spiritual truth. But there was justice in Heaven. A way of discernment was open to every man though not through the intellect. That old Greek had been right. The explanations made by men's brains followed experience. They did not lead. Only love could teach you about God. To express Him perfectly

you must kill self-love. It was no use despising the life of the brain. Paul knew he would always have too much reverence for intelligence to do that. But he had made the mind the judge. He had longed that the new revelation should appeal to the clever. Now he saw for the rest of his life another path lie clear before him. He must put his brains at the disposal of the stupid. Life was not a tragedy. There was help. He could teach men how to find God. His message had made his destiny.

XVIII

WHEN Chloe's slave had gone, Paul read for a second time the letters which he had brought to Ephesus from Corinth. He sat still for a while thinking over the news which the man had given in answer to his questioning. Then he jumped up and went out to find Sosthenes.

"Will you come to my room, Sosthenes?" he said, and Sosthenes went with him.

"One of Chloe's slaves has just come from Corinth," Paul explained. "He has brought more letters about the quarrels there. They must be answered at once. I want you to read them, and when we have talked them over I will dictate the answers."

Sosthenes read the letters and put them on the bench beside him, and waited for Paul to speak.

"It is bad news, is it not?" Paul asked. "And the slave confirms what they say. You lived so many years in Corinth that you know it even better than I do. Who do you think is at the bottom of this?"

Sosthenes plucked at his long thin beard thoughtfully.

"There was always that fight with the synagogue," he suggested.

"But we had settled that before I left!" Paul objected.

"Somebody may have come from Jerusalem. The rumour that you preach false doctrine always originates there. It seems to follow you wherever you go."

Paul frowned.

"All my troubles come from Jews. The Romans are always more just."

"You haven't come up against them yet. Wait until you have to attack their religion!" Sosthenes said shrewdly. Paul brushed the warning aside.

"I suppose Peter and James still think I am in the wrong. It is years since I saw them. If they had accepted my revelation with generosity the orthodox Jews might have accepted it too."

"Never!" Sosthenes exclaimed emphatically. "Peter has no control over the provincial synagogues. He, too, is considered a renegade. You could never convert the Jews in Corinth!"

"Perhaps not," Paul agreed. "But the number of converted Gentiles ought to be proof that I am right. How could the Church grow as it does if God is not with me?"

"Of a certainty God is with you. But it was your energy and fire that made you successful in Corinth. You worked day and night." Sosthenes hesitated. Then he added, "Perhaps Apollos is the cause of this row?"

"Apollos?" Paul repeated. "Oh, no, I don't think it is Apollos. Since he was baptised he has ceased talking of the theories he brought from Alexandria."

Sosthenes looked doubtful.

"When a man has been brought up with the habit of discussion he will always discuss. Apollos used to believe

that Philo was inspired. If he has debated Philo's philosophy in Corinth and pointed out where it differs from yours, that may explain these divisions."

Paul did not agree.

"I don't think that is the explanation," he said. "Philo may have had glimmerings of the truth, but Apollos believes now that the Gospel that was given to me is the only true Gospel."

"You will find it hard to convince Alexandrian Jews of that. Some of Philo's doctrines are sound, but is there anything in the world so difficult as to make men change their creeds?" Sosthenes sighed. "I suppose on an unknown path every foot is slow. Change must begin inside."

"The Corinthians have changed," Paul objected, and Sosthenes, a smile in his acute eyes, replied:

"You made them! You beat down their indifference into interest."

Paul nodded. That was true. After his humiliation at Athens he had determined to succeed in Corinth. He had hurled himself at the work there.

"At first I thought them dense to spiritual things. . . ."

"So they are," Sosthenes interrupted. "Mercury in his cap and sandals has always been their god. They care for nothing but money-making."

"But they are tolerant. Once I got a hearing they accepted the truth," Paul exclaimed.

Sosthenes shook his head.

"You must be tolerant if you want to succeed in commerce. When your customers are of every creed you

must at least pretend to regard them as equals. But in reality the Corinthians think no one can surpass them. All non-Corinthians are inferior."

"But they had faith. That is a thing of the spirit," Paul objected.

"Faith is part of every business transaction," Sosthenes retorted. "If you don't believe, or pretend to believe, that a man's goods are what he says they are, you can't trade. If the goods are not up to sample you reject them afterwards, but you must try them first."

"They must have found mine good in Corinth. When I call for faith I ask men to embark on a dark sea . . . to follow an unseen lure. If they follow, they prove the faith. It is the first step that counts. . . ." Paul stopped short. The Athenians had no faith. They had listened and mocked. They had heard but done nothing. Every new idea that might clash with their ancient philosophy was rejected. For all thought that did not originate in Athens was folly.

"Corinthians accept new ideas," he added slowly.

"They are born speculators," Sosthenes replied promptly. "One idea is as good as another to them. They never stop to examine them. They won't waste time in thought."

"But they founded a Church," Paul protested. Sosthenes shook his head again.

"Their whole life is action. Nothing else is real to them so when they adopt an idea they act on it at once. And then you began with the poor, and they are always easier to reach than the rich. Their minds are not bound

up with property so they are more open to things of the spirit."

"It is true that I began with the poor," Paul said. "But remember what a difference there was after eighteen months! There are many rich and powerful people now in the Church."

Sosthenes smiled.

"We have several unpolished and uncouth men who value one another by what they possess, just as a tree is valued by the timber in its trunk. Their power comes from their money. Rich men respect any form of power, and you are powerful. They themselves are corrupt to the marrow, but they accepted your revelation because of your character. They thought that everybody wants to buy vice, and that you should come to Corinth and not wish to live in Corinthian fashion impressed them. I wonder how many men go to Corinth and leave again without having paid one visit to the Temple of Aphrodite? When they saw that you were bored by that side of life they were curious as to what manner of man you were, and once they listened you soon showed them that ideas are more powerful than money."

"They may be noisy and modern," Paul conceded, "but they are not like Athenians, cynical towards anybody who is in earnest."

"You can't afford to be cynical if you want to make money," Sosthenes said. "That comes after you have made it. The Corinthians are always making and losing fortunes, and as that appears worth while to them, natur-

ally, once they can be made to stop and listen, other things appear worth while also. I wonder how long their enthusiasm will last now you are not with them to keep it alight?"

"You are not very encouraging," Paul complained, and Sosthenes answered:

"I know them too well! No civilisation can rise above the level of character of the people who make it. Sooner or later the lower men, if they have power, will pull it down to their level. There are only three classes in Corinth; criminals, millionaires, and honest but stupid poor men. That is why I ask if they will stand fast to your teaching."

"I shall go back and make them," Paul broke in impetuously. "I will not let them fall away."

"Corinthians were always unstable. They split easily into parties. I doubt if even you will ever make anything of them," Sosthenes said.

"Won't I?" Paul replied grimly. "Get your pen, and you will see."

Sosthenes brought his writing materials.

"Begin with the usual compliments," Paul said. "To the Church of God in Corinth, and so on. Have you got that down?"

"I have," Sosthenes answered.

"From Paul and from Sosthenes. Have you got that? The usual blessing . . . not that they deserve it, but put it down. Now let me think."

Sosthenes wrote the customary greetings and waited

for Paul to continue the dictation. Paul, thinking hard, was silent for a few moments. Then he said :

"I must not begin by blame. Encouragement is wiser. It makes people hopeless if you point out only their faults. I will begin by showing them their advantages. Try this. You can alter and add to it later. 'I always thank God for the blessing He has bestowed upon you when through your union with Christ you were enriched in every way. There is no gift in which you are deficient. It is because of this that you confirm the revelation that was made to me. God has called you into communion with His Son, and He will strengthen you while you are waiting, so that at the Day of His coming you may be found without blame. God will not fail you.'"

"You are going too fast for me, Paul," Sosthenes said. "I cannot write as quickly as you speak."

"I am sorry," Paul replied, and sat waiting until Sosthenes caught up to him.

"I think I have said enough about that. Now let us write about these quarrels," Paul went on dictating.

"I appeal to you to agree in what you profess, and not to allow divisions to exist amongst you. You must be of one mind and one opinion. I have been informed that party feeling is strong amongst you. . . ."

Sosthenes looked up from his writing.

"Shall I say who told you, Paul?" he suggested. "They may blame the wrong person, and it will lead to more bother."

"You are right. Yes. Say Chloe's household. You need not say which member."

Paul waited until Sosthenes had corrected what he had written, and when he began again, his heavy brows were knit and his voice was hot, as if something in his mind angered him.

"I mean this. If everyone of you says either 'I follow Paul,' or 'I follow Apollos,' or 'I belong to Peter,' or 'I belong to Christ,' cannot you see that you tear the Christ in pieces? Was it Paul who was crucified for you? Were you baptised into the faith of Peter? I am thankful that I did not baptise any of you, so that no one of you can say he was baptised into my faith."

Sosthenes stopped writing.

"But is that correct, Paul? Did you not baptise Crispus? Don't you remember that it was before I was converted, and that because of his baptism he had to cease to be President of the Synagogue, and that I was elected in his place?"

"You are quite right," Paul agreed. "How could I have forgotten it? It was after that that the Jews brought me before Gallio."

"Yes, and the Corinthians beat me because they thought I was responsible. You were already popular with them."

"Wasn't it because they hated all Jews, and thought Gallio must do so, too, when he refused to allow our religious disputes to be settled in the Roman court?" Paul asked.

"No. They sided with you against the other Jews. Of course they hate us because we take their trade away from them. They don't understand that our laws against

usury make success easier. If you have to work with your own money, and not let it out to others, you work harder and take more care of it. When Gallio said that the complaint against you was only a matter of words and names and the Jewish creed, and that Roman Law didn't deal with such things, it pleased them, because it was a judgment against their Jewish competitors. . . . It was a just decision. Gallio knows nothing of our creed, but he is a gentle creature. He would not have allowed them to beat me if he had known. They caught me outside the court."

"Romans and Greeks are alike. It is hard to convince them that there is any wisdom outside their own," Paul said gloomily.

"Do you ever read their books?" Sosthenes asked, and Paul replied :

"Sometimes. They write very lewd tales, and their serious books are not religious. We must get on with this letter. Correct that about the baptising. I think I also baptised the household of Stephanas . . . and Gaius. I do not know if I baptised any one else. My mission from Christ was to tell the good news."

Paul paused to allow Sosthenes time to correct, and when Sosthenes had done it and looked up to hear what was to come next, he saw that Paul sat silent, his head in his hands, thinking. After a moment Sosthenes asked :

"What am I to say now, Paul?"

Paul raised his head with a start.

"I was thinking," he said, "that the Athenians do not

see how hard it is to touch men's hearts through their minds, and yet it is their only method."

Sosthenes pulled at his long thin beard again. "You are supposed to believe in the same method, Paul," he remarked.

"I!" Paul cried. "How can you say so? I may once have done so, but I never tried in Corinth to prove my message by philosophy! It was proved, as you yourself said, by evidence of the spiritual power I brought. I do not want faith to be based on philosophy, but on the power of God. If you, Sosthenes, who are with me, do not understand, how can they? I must explain. I never claimed to speak with knowledge of Greek philosophy, but I do claim to know more of the will of God than any Greek does."

"I am sure you know more, Paul. I did not mean that," Sosthenes said. "You are clever, so you cannot help expressing your revelation cleverly. I meant that mere cleverness leaves men cold when they talk about things of the Spirit."

"Do you think I do not know that?" Paul retorted hotly. "I was just going to speak of that very thing to the Corinthians. I know I was a failure at Athens." He stopped, choked with the memory. No success in Corinth could free him from that . . .

"Perhaps you tried their own method and it was not new enough to catch them," Sosthenes suggested critically, and Paul, passionately hurt, answered:

"I could not endure that they should say my good news was a revelation for the ignorant only. If I did wrong,

I learnt by it. I was altogether different in Corinth. Write this. 'For my own part, brothers, when I came to you I made no display of eloquence or philosophy, for I had made up my mind to be absolutely ignorant of everything but Jesus Christ and his crucifixion. The Jews ask for miraculous signs, the Greeks think they will find salvation in their philosophy, but I proclaim a Saviour who has been crucified. To the Jews a crucified Saviour is an obstacle, and to the Greeks it is mere folly, but to those who have been called he is the very Power and Wisdom of God. For God's folly is wiser than men's wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than men's strength. I did not try to tell my good news in the language of philosophy, for to people who think themselves wise my news is mere folly. Does not the Scripture say, 'I will bring the philosophy of the philosophers to nothing and I will make of no account the mind of the intelligent'? And has not God shown that the philosophy of the world is folly? For where is the philosopher now? Where is the teacher of the Law? Where is the investigator into problems? Since these thinkers, in their wisdom, would not learn to know God, has not God seen fit by what they call this silly proclamation of ours to save those who believe in it?' "

Paul rose from his seat and began to walk rapidly up and down the room, and Sosthenes wrote his words as quickly as he could drive the pen.

"Look at the facts. There are not many wise amongst you, there are not many with influence, there are not many highborn . . . as the world counts these things.

Yet God chose what the world counts stupid to put the clever men of the world to shame, and God chose what the world counts weak to put the strong things of the world to shame. God always chooses what to the world is unreal to bring the realities of the world to nothing, so that in His presence no human being should boast."

Paul's vehemence seemed to push everything before it and Sosthenes had no difficulty in keeping up with him. He finished the last word now, and then he looked up, his sharp eyes soft with apology.

"I am sorry, Paul. I did not mean to hurt you."

"No doubt I deserved it," Paul said bitterly, and Sosthenes made no reply, but bent to his writing again.

Paul was now dictating slowly.

"To the merely intellectual man the teaching of the Spirit of God is sheer folly. He cannot understand it, because it can only be understood by spiritual insight. But the man who has spiritual insight is able to understand everything even though he himself is understood by nobody."

He stopped abruptly, and turned his face away, biting his lip. Then suddenly he wheeled round again, his eyes shining with affection.

"Forgive me, Sosthenes," he said. "I was wrong to be angry with you. I kick too hard against criticism, and I was humbled at Athens. Shall we go on now?" He hastily began dictating again, and Sosthenes, greatly moved, took down his words.

"It is a divine philosophy that we teach. It is about the hidden purpose of God. God's long-hidden purpose,

which before Time began was designed for our glory. Scripture speaks of it as 'What eye has never seen nor ear ever heard, what the mind of man has not been able to imagine . . . this has God prepared for those who love Him.' This philosophy is unknown to all the leaders of to-day. Had men known it, they would not have crucified the Christ. Yet to us God has revealed it through His Spirit, for the Spirit of God fathoms all things, even the inmost depths of God's being.

"Amongst men, who knows a man's inner thoughts, except the man's own spirit within him? So, in the same way, only the Spirit of God knows God's inner thoughts. And as for us, it is not the spirit of this world that has taught us, but the Spirit of God, and therefore we speak of these gifts given by God not in the language taught by human philosophy, but in language taught by the Spirit. We explain spiritual things in spiritual words. Do not deceive yourselves. In God's sight this world's wisdom is folly. So if any one of you imagine that as regards this world he is a wise man, let him become a fool, so that then he may begin to be wise. For God catches the wise in their own craftiness, and shows man how fruitless are the deliberations of the clever. Do not the Scriptures say, 'Who has so understood the mind of God as to be able to instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ." Paul stopped and said half to himself:

"That is, we try to have it," but Sosthenes, though he heard, let the words be, and Paul went on:

"When I first came to you, I was weak and full of fears and in great anxiety."

Sosthenes dropped his pen in astonishment, and stooped in confusion to pick it up.

"I beg your pardon, Paul. Did you say weak?" he asked.

"Yes," Paul said. "I was born weak and a coward, and I had lost faith in the message because of my failure at Athens. I pretend to be strong when inwardly I am full of fear. But I know that I have been given a message and that I must have courage to deliver it. And courage comes. Write this now. 'How could I have spoken to you as if you had spiritual insight? I was only able to speak to you as worldly-minded, because that was what you were. Even now you are still worldly-minded. Is not this true? While you are jealous and full of party feeling, what are you but worldly? When one of you says, "I follow Paul," and the other says, "I follow Apollos," are you not behaving exactly as other men do? What, I ask you, am I, and what is Apollos? We are only servants through whom you were led to believe. And had not the Lord helped each of you, should we have had any success? I planted, and Apollos watered, but it was God who gave the increase. Neither the man who plants nor the man who waters is of any account. It is God who has caused the growth, who counts. We are God's fellow-workers. You are God's harvest' . . . no, Sosthenes, say 'God's building.' Go on thus: 'I carried out the work which was given to me and laid the foundations like a skilful master-builder. Another man is now building upon my foundation. But let everyone be careful how he builds. No man can lay any other foundation than the one which I

have already laid, which is Jesus Christ. And at the day when he comes the quality of each man's work will be shown by the condition of the materials he has built on my foundation. That day will begin with fire which will test each man's work. . . . If any man's work is burnt up he will suffer the loss of it . . . he himself will escape, but only as it were by passing through fire.' "

He ceased, and Sosthenes wrote on to the end. Then he looked at Paul, who had sat down and now leant against the wall as if exhausted, and said reluctantly :

"I am sorry to worry you, but there is this question of the actions they are bringing against one another."

Paul roused himself.

"We will stop that. . . . Wait! This must be emphatic. . . ." He began to dictate again.

"Can it be that you have law-suits tried before heathen courts? Do you not know that Christ's people will try the world? If you have to try the world, are you unfit to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to try Angels . . . to say nothing of the affairs of this life? Is there not one man amongst you who is wise enough to decide between two of his brothers? . . . It is a loss to you to go to Law. Why not rather let yourselves be wronged or cheated? Instead of this, you wrong and cheat others yourselves, even your brothers."

Sosthenes finished. Then he asked :

"Are you going to speak of that case of immorality?"

Paul nodded.

"Tell them they must put the man away. They are not to associate with immoral people. Say that no thief

or drunkard or adulterer or sodomite or miser or abusive person will have any share in the Kingdom. They are to have nothing to do with such men."

Sosthenes hesitated.

"It will cut them off from most people," he suggested, and Paul replied:

"That is true, I am afraid. Let me think! Write this. 'I do not, of course, mean men of the world. You would have to leave the world altogether if you refuse to meet them. I mean those who are brothers in name. What have I to do with judging men who are outside the Church? God judges those who are without. It is for us to judge those who are within.'"

Sosthenes took notes rapidly as Paul spoke, and when he had come to an end reminded him:

"There is still the threat of sitting in judgment upon you."

Paul sat straight up and his eyes blazed in his head.

"Do you think I care about that? What does it matter what they try to do?"

Sosthenes said nothing, and Paul, still infuriated, cried:

"Shall I never escape from these attacks from Jerusalem? They follow me everywhere."

"I think it would be wiser to say something," Sosthenes advised mildly, and after a moment's struggle with himself, Paul burst out:

"Write this: 'Am I not free? Am I not an Apostle, too? Have I not seen the Lord Jesus?' Say to them 'Are not you yourselves my work, done in partnership with

the Lord? If I am not an Apostle to others, at least I am to you, for you are the seal that stamped me as in union with the Lord, for truly all the signs of an Apostle were shown among you. It weighs very little with me whether I am judged by you or by any human tribunal. I do not even judge myself. I am not conscious of anything against myself, but that does not prove me innocent. If men will look on us as Christ's servants, stewards of the hidden truths of God, then they will see that what they ask of a steward is that he should be trustworthy. Of that it is the Lord who is my judge. Wait until he comes. He will throw light on many things that are now obscure, for only he can reveal the motives that are in the minds of men.' "

Paul had calmed down when Sosthenes came to the end of this. So he was able to say:

"There is also the question of the payment of the teachers, Paul."

Paul frowned heavily.

"That does not concern me, for I have not been paid." He thought a moment and then he said:

"I suppose I must deal with it, because of others who have to be paid."

He jumped up from his seat and started his restless pacing up and down.

"But it is intolerable to have such things said. The defense I make is this: Have we not a right to food and drink? Have we not a right to take a wife with us? The other Apostles and the Master's brothers and Peter all take their wives about with them. Is it only I who must

work for my bread? Does any soldier ever serve at his own expense? Does any one ever plant a vineyard and not eat the grapes? Does anyone herd cows and not drink their milk? Am I in all this speaking on my own authority? What does the Law say? 'Thou shalt not muzzle a bullock.' Was God thinking of bullocks? Was he not thinking of us? Surely he wrote this for our sakes? The plougher ought not to plough nor the thresher to thresh without a right to part of the grain. We are sowing spiritual grain for you. Is it too much if we reap from you an earthly harvest? If others have this right, why not we? Don't you see, Sosthenes, how unfair they are? Why should they blame me for what I have never done? For I am not exercising this right. We endure, tell them, everything rather than impede the good news. Yet those who serve the altar share the offerings of the altar, and those who do the work of the Temple live on what comes from the Temple. So, too, the Master appointed that those who tell the good news should get their living from the good news. I am not saying this to make such an arrangement for myself. I would far rather die!"

Sosthenes looked up from his notes, and Paul stopped in front of him and answered his unspoken question with passion.

"Nobody shall say that my boast is a vain one. It is quite true. If I tell the good news I have nothing to boast of, for I can't help doing it. Woe is me if I do not tell it. If I told it unwillingly it would be because I was forced to do it as a duty, but if I tell it willingly I have a right to a reward. Is not that so, Sosthenes?"

Sosthenes nodded and Paul went on vehemently :

“What is my reward, then? Say to them that the only reward I want is to give the good news free of all cost. I care so much that I would give it if it cost me my life, and you know that very well, Sosthenes. That is why I make but sparing use of the right which my apostleship gives me. It is true. For though I was entirely free, yet to save souls I made myself everybody’s slave. To the Jews I was a Jew, to those subject to the Law I became subject to Law, to those who have no Law I became like a man who has no Law. No, Sosthenes, of course I don’t mean that I was freed from God’s Law, I only mean I learnt to understand each man’s mind as he did himself. How else could I help him? I myself have always been subject to the Law of Christ. Yes, put that down. I don’t want them to misunderstand. To the weak I have been weak.” Paul stopped suddenly, and, throwing out his arms, cried :

“I have become all things to all men, so that by any means I might win one, and yet do they ever think of what it has cost me? I do everything for the sake of the good news, so that I may share its blessing with them, and you would think from what we now hear that they had done it all themselves. No, Sosthenes, I will not stop. I will let them know what I think of then. Write this now.”

His tone was urgent, and Sosthenes wrote on without making any comment. Paul’s voice was biting as he dictated.

“Who made you superior? What have you that has

not been given you? If you have received it as a gift, why do you boast as if it had originated with yourselves? Are you so soon satisfied? Are you so soon rich? Have you begun to reign without us? Would, indeed, that you had, for then we might have a chance of reigning, too, with you, through you."

Sosthenes did not dare look up as he took the words down, and Paul's voice grew in bitterness as he went on:

"God has exhibited us, the Apostles, as men doomed to death. We are made a spectacle to the Universe, to angels, and to men. We are fools, but you, by your union with Christ, are men of discernment! We are weak. You are strong. We are despised. You are honoured. We go hungry, thirsty and naked. We are beaten. We are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. We meet abuse with blessings. We meet persecution with endurance. We meet slander with gentle appeals. We are treated as the scum of the earth, as the vilest of the vile to this very hour."

At this Sosthenes looked up, and Paul, meeting his eye, leaped at his meaning and turned his head away. The bitterness had died out of his voice and the gloominess from his eyes when he answered:

"You are right, Sosthenes. I am getting too hot. I do not want to hurt them, for I love them, but I am hurt myself. I was being too hard on them. We will soften it down. What shall I say? This, 'I write these words not to shame you but to warn you as my very dear children. Though you have thousands of instructors in the faith, yet you have not many fathers. It was I who became your

father by means of the Good News. Therefore I entreat you follow my example.' ”

Sosthenes wrote, and then Paul said :

“Something more must be done to stop these divisions. A letter will not be enough. Say I will send Timothy to them. Say ‘Timothy, my own dear child.’ Tell them he will remind them of my methods of teaching the faith, and, Sosthenes, say the methods which I follow everywhere in the Church, for it is true. I no longer follow the way of the Athenians, as you thought I did. And, Sosthenes, another thing. They will think I am not coming, perhaps, and that they can do what they like. Say this : ‘Some of you are puffed up with pride, thinking I am not coming to you. But come I will, and that soon. I shall find out then, not what words the men use that are so puffed up, but what power they have. For the Kingdom of God is based not on words, but on power.’ ”

As Sosthenes wrote Paul suddenly laughed, and said :

“What are they but children? Add this : that they can choose. Ask if I shall come with a rod or in a loving spirit? Which do they want? And, Sosthenes, we must deal with those fools who speak with tongues. They are going too far. In their spirit they may feel they are speaking hidden truths, but nobody understands what they say. We must discourage them gently. What good is it to speak with tongues when your words are unintelligible? Tell them that even in music, if flutes and harps produce sound only and not distinct notes, no tune can be recognised. If a bugle sounds a doubtful call, who will prepare for battle? They are speaking to the winds. Say

that there are in the world a certain number of languages, and not one of them fails to convey a meaning. . . . If we do not happen to know a language we are foreigners to those who do speak it. . . . They must use their minds as well as their inspirations. . . . Tell them I would rather use five words with my mind than a thousand with tongues. . . . It has nothing to do with what we were saying about cleverness, Sosthenes. This is common sense."

Sosthenes smiled. He passed a hand over his bald head.

"I agree. The presence of God in the mind may be an enduring fire, but we must express it with sanity."

"They need discipline," Paul said, and Sosthenes suggested:

"You might use Philo's example about Greek athletes and their discipline."

He hunted out a manuscript from a pile that lay near him and, unrolling it quickly, read aloud:

"I know also that combatants in the pancratium very often, out of eagerness for victory, when their bodies are exhausted, strive with their souls alone. Shall we, then, fancy that if, for the sake of some wild olives and a crown of parsley leaves, those men have been able to trample on the fear of death, that those who train in themselves the invisible mind (the man himself bearing about with him the appearance seen by the senses as his house) will not be willing to die for the sake of freedom?" "

Paul nodded eagerly, and Sosthenes went on reading:

"These things are not brought about without a strug-

gle or without severe work, but only when anyone, having gone through all the labours of prudence, proceeds to practise himself in the exercises of the soul and to wrestle against the reasonings which, hostile to it, seek to torment it. It is the part of him who sees God, not to depart from the sacred games without the crown of victory, but rather to carry off the prize of triumph.'"

Sosthenes ceased reading, and Paul said:

"That is a great eulogy! The whole of our training is to make the body into a tool for the use of the spirit. . . . But we must speak of love as well as of discipline. . . . Love that gives the strength to train. . . . I sometimes forget it. It is greatest of all. I wrote about it when I was in Arabia. . . . We will do that to-morrow. We must say something too about the end. . . .

Sosthenes was putting his tablets together. He dropped them and took up the roll again.

"Philo had written about that also. . . . Listen! It begins about prosperous men. . . . It would do for Corinth. . . . 'If the Creator of the universe gives you a share of His power, do you think it fitting that you should behave with arrogance towards men who are akin to you by nature? For, my fine fellow, you brought nothing into the world with you, not even yourself. Naked you came, and naked you shall leave. The time between birth and death is only a loan from God. . . .'

"That is good," Paul said. "We can use it but we must say more. . . . Tell them they are all to remain in the condition in which they were called for the world as we see it is passing away. The trumpet will sound and

the dead will rise, and we, too, shall be transformed . . . in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. . . . For the Lord is coming. . . . We will write the rest to-morrow."

XIX

IT was in Rome that Luke put together his notes for the story he was writing of the growth of the new religion, and brought the draft to Paul. He left it there for Paul to read. This is what Luke had written.

“On leaving Athens, Paul went to Corinth. There he met a Jew of the name of Aquila, a native of Pontus, with his wife Priscilla. Paul paid them a visit, and, since their trade was the same as his, he stayed and worked with them. Their trade was tent-making. Every Sabbath Paul gave addresses in the Synagogue, trying to convince both Jews and Greeks.

“But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, bringing assistance in money from their friends, Paul left, and went to the house of a certain Titius Justus, who had been accustomed to join in the worship of God, and whose house was next door to the Synagogue. There Paul devoted himself entirely to delivering the message.

“Crispus, the President of the Synagogue, came to believe in the Lord, and so did all his household; and many of the Corinthians, as they listened to Paul, became believers in Christ and were baptised. One night the Lord said to Paul, in a vision :

“ ‘Have no fear, but continue to speak, and refuse to be silenced : for I am with you, and no one shall do you harm, for I have many people in this city.’

“So he settled there for a year and a half, and taught God’s message among the people.

“After this he sailed to Syria with Priscilla and Aquila. They put into Ephesus, and there Paul left them, and set out on a tour through the Phrygian district of Galatia. Meanwhile there had come to Ephesus an Alexandrian Jew, named Apollos, an eloquent man, who was well versed in the Scriptures. He had been well instructed in the cause of the Lord, and with burning zeal he spoke of, and taught carefully the facts about Jesus. When he wanted to cross to Greece, the brethren furthered his plans, and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On his arrival he proved of great assistance to those who had, through the loving-kindness of God, become believers in Christ.

“While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland districts of Roman Asia, and went to Ephesus, where, in the Synagogue for three months, he spoke out fearlessly, giving addresses and trying to convince his hearers about the Kingdom of God. Some of them, however, hardened their hearts and refused to believe, denouncing the Cause before the people. So Paul left them, and withdrew his disciples, and gave daily addresses in the lecture-hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all who lived in Roman Asia, Jews and Greeks alike, heard the Lord’s message.

“Some time after these events Paul resolved to go

through Macedonia and Greece, and then make his way to Jerusalem. 'And after I have been there,' he said, 'I must visit Rome also.' So he sent to Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, while he himself stayed for some time longer in Roman Asia. He decided to return by way of Macedonia. He was accompanied by Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus of Beroea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, as well as by Tychicus and Trophimus of Roman Asia. These men went to Troas and waited for us there; while we ourselves sailed from Philippi after the Passover, and joined them five days later at Troas, where we stayed for a week.

"We started first, went on board ship, and sailed for Assos, intending to take Paul on board there. This was by his own arrangement, as he intended to go by land himself. So, when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went on to Mitylene. The day after we had sailed from there we arrived off Chios, touched at Samos the following day, and the next day reached Miletus; for Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so as to avoid spending much time in Roman Asia. He was making haste to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the Festival at the close of the harvest.

"When we had set sail, we ran before the wind to Cos. The next day we came to Rhodes, and from there to Patara, where we found a ship crossing to Phœnicia, and went on board and set sail. After sighting Cyprus and leaving it on the left, we sailed to Syria, and put into Tyre, where the ship was to discharge her cargo.

There we found the disciples, and stayed a week with them. When we had come to the end of our visit, we went on our way, all the disciples, with their wives and children, escorting us out of the city. We knelt down on the beach and prayed, and then said good-bye to one another; after which we went on board and they returned home.

“After we had made the run from Tyre, we landed at Ptolemais, and exchanged greetings with the brethren there, and spent a day with them. The next day we left, and reached Caesarea, where we went to the house of Philip, and stayed with him. He had four unmarried daughters, who had the gift of prophecy . . . and said that Paul would be bound at Jerusalem and given up to the Romans. . . . When we heard that, we and the people of the place began to entreat Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. It was then that Paul made the reply:

“‘Why are you weeping and breaking my heart like this? For my part, I am ready not only to be bound, but even to suffer death at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus.’ So, as he would not be persuaded, we said no more to him, only adding, ‘The Lord’s will be done.’

“At the end of our visit, we made our preparations, and started on our way up to Jerusalem. Some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, and brought Manson with them, a Cypriot disciple of long standing, with whom we were to stay. On our arrival at Jerusalem the next day Paul went to see James, and the officers of the Church were present. After greeting them, Paul related in detail all that God had done among the Gentiles

through his efforts; and when they had heard it they began praising God, and said to Paul:

“‘You see, brother, that the Jews may be numbered by tens of thousands, and they are all earnest in upholding the Jewish Law. Now they have heard it said about you that you teach all Jews in foreign countries to forsake Moses, for you tell them not to circumcise their children or even to observe Jewish customs. Well, now, do what we are going to suggest. We have four men here, who have of their own accord put themselves under a vow. Join these men, share their purification, and help to pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads.’ On this Paul joined the men, and the next day shared their purification, and went into the Temple, and gave notice of the expiration of the period of purification when the usual offering should have been made on behalf of each of them.

“But as seven days were drawing to a close, the Jews from Roman Asia caught sight of Paul in the Temple, and caused great excitement among all the people present by seizing Paul and shouting:

“‘Men of Israel! Help! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people, our Law, and this place; and what is more, he has actually brought Greeks into the Temple and defiled this sacred place.

“(For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in Paul’s company in the city, and were under the belief that Paul had taken him into the Temple.)

The whole city was stirred, and the people quickly collected, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the Tem-

ple, when the doors were immediately shut. They were bent upon killing him, when it was reported to the officer commanding the garrison that all Jerusalem was in commotion. He instantly got together some officers and men, and charged down upon the crowd, who, when they saw the commanding officer and his men, stopped beating Paul. Then he went up to Paul, arrested him, ordered him to be double chained, and proceeded to inquire who he was and what he had been doing. Some of the crowd said one thing and some another ; and, as he could get no definite reply on account of the uproar, he ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks, and directed that he should be examined under the lash, that he might find out the reason for their outcry against him. But just as they had tied him up to be scourged, Paul said to the captain standing near :

“ ‘Is it legal for you to scourge a Roman citizen, unconvicted?’

“The officer, on hearing that Paul was a citizen, ordered the chains to be taken off.

“That night the Lord came and stood by Paul, and said :

“ ‘Courage ! You have borne witness for me here and you must bear witness in Rome also.’

“The commanding officer ordered his soldiers to have horses ready for Paul to ride, so that they might take him safely to Felix, the Governor. The soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took charge of Paul and conducted him by night to Antipatris ; and on the next day they entered Caesarea and brought Paul before the Governor.

Felix inquired to what province Paul belonged, and learning that he came from Cilicia, he said :

“ ‘I will hear all you have to say as soon as your accusers have arrived.’

“And he ordered Paul to be kept under guard in Herod’s Government House.

“Felix adjourned the case—he had a fairly accurate knowledge of all that concerned the Cause. He gave orders to the captain in charge of Paul to keep him in custody, but to relax the regulations, and not to prevent his personal friends from attending to his wants. But after the lapse of two years, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus.

“Three days after Festus had entered upon his province, he left Caesarea and went up to Jerusalem. There the Chief Priests and the leading men among the Jews laid an information before him against Paul, and asked—to Paul’s injury—to have Paul brought to Jerusalem. But Festus answered that Paul was in prison at Caesarea, and that he himself would be leaving for that place shortly.

“ ‘So let the influential men among you,’ he said, ‘go down with me, and, if there is anything amiss in the man, charge him formally with it.’

“After staying among them some eight or ten days, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he took his seat on the Bench, and ordered Paul to be brought before him. On Paul’s appearance, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem surrounded him, and made many serious charges, which they failed to establish. Paul’s answer

to the charge was: 'I have not committed any offence against the Jewish Law, or the Temple, or the Emperor. I am standing at the Emperor's Bar, where I ought to be tried. I appeal to Caesar.'

"Upon that, Festus, after conferring with his Council, answered:

" 'You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go.'

"As it was decided that we were to sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were put in charge of a captain of the Augustan Guard, named Julius. We went on board a ship from Adramyttium, which was on the point of sailing to the ports along the coast of Roman Asia, and put to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, went with us. The next day we put into Sidon, where Julius treated Paul in a friendly manner, and allowed him to go to see his friends and receive their hospitality. Putting to sea again, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the wind was against us; and, after crossing the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we reached Myra in Lycia. There the Roman officer found an Alexandrian ship on her way to Italy, and put us on board of her.

"For several days our progress was slow, and it was only with difficulty that we arrived off Cnidus. As the wind was still unfavourable when we came off Cape Salmone, we sailed under the lee of Crete, and with difficulty, by keeping close in shore, we reached a place called Fair Havens, near which was the town of Lasea. And as the harbour was not a suitable one to winter in, the majority were in favour of continuing the voyage, in the hope of

being able to reach Phoenix and winter there. Phoenix was a Cretan harbour, open to the north-east and south-east. So when a light wind sprang up from the south, thinking that they had found their opportunity, they weighed anchor and kept along the coast of Crete, close in shore. But shortly afterwards a hurricane came down on us off the land—a north-easter, as it is called. The ship was caught by it and was unable to keep her head to the wind, so we had to give way and let her drive before it. Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we only just managed to secure the ship's boat, and, after hoisting it on board, the men frapped the ship. But, afraid of being driven on to the Syrtis Sands in Africa, they lowered the yard, and then drifted. So violently were we tossed about by the storm that the next day they began throwing the cargo overboard, and on the following day threw out the ship's tackle with their own hands. As neither sun nor stars were visible for several days, and as the gale still continued severe, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

“It was now the fourteenth night of the storm, and we were drifting about in the Adriatic Sea, when, about midnight, the sailors began to suspect that they were drawing near land. So they took soundings, and found twenty fathoms of water. After waiting a little, they took soundings again, and found fifteen fathoms. Then, as they were afraid of our being driven upon some rocky coast, they let go four anchors from the stern, and longed for daylight. When daylight came they could not make out what land it was, but, observing a creek in which there

was a beach, they consulted as to whether they could run the ship safely into it. Then they cast off, and abandoned the anchors, and at the same time unlashed the gear of the steering oars, hoisted the foresail to the wind, and made for the beach. They got, however, into a kind of channel, and there ran the ship aground. The bows stuck fast and could not be moved, while the stern began breaking up under the strain. The advice of the sailors was that the prisoners should be killed, for fear that any of them should swim away and make their escape. But the Roman officer prevented them carrying out their intention, and ordered that those who could swim should be the first to jump into the sea and try to reach the shore; and that the rest should follow, some on planks, and others on different pieces of the ship. In these various ways every one managed to get safely ashore.

“When we were all safe, we found that the island was called Malta. The natives showed us marked kindness, for they lit a fire and took us all under shelter, because it had come on to rain and was cold. In that neighbourhood there was an estate belonging to the Governor of the island, whose name was Publius. He took us up to his house, and for three days entertained us most courteously.

“After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island. She was an Alexandrian vessel, and had the Twin Sons of Zeus for her figure-head. We put in at Syracuse, and stayed there three days, and from there we worked to windward and so got to Rhegium. A day later a south wind sprang up and took us to Puteoli

in two days. Thus we came to Rome by way of the forum of Appius and the three Taverns."

Paul put the rude draft down. And then in his mind he began to fill up the gaps in Luke's story.

XX

IT was dawn on a dull spring day and the *Castor and Pollux* laboured heavily towards land. Above the grey-green sea masses of grey clouds moved as slowly as the ship. Close to where Paul stood with Julius the centurion on the forward deck, a big sea-bird, all legs and beak, had perched on the bulwark. As it smoothed out its draggled tail and cleaned its beak against its gnarled knee, it kept a suspicious eye, that filled half its profile, fixed on Julius, who laughed as he watched it.

"It's making ready for land," he said, and shooed it off.

The bird rose slowly, and flying low, made for the dim and colourless coast, and suddenly the sun came out. The sky and sea turned brilliant blue and the mist began to lift from the mountains. Paul saw to the right the flat green top of Vesuvius slowly disclose itself, while ahead, across the bay, the white palaces and villas of Misenium seemed to rise straight out of the sea.

"A sunburst is a good omen. I hope it means liberty," Julius said.

"I thought you scorned omens?" Paul smiled at the Centurion.

"I don't believe that livers and guts are acquainted with the will of heaven," Julius replied grimly. "But sun-

shine brings hope. We are close in to land. I'm afraid that means your shackles again."

On board the ship Paul had not been fettered to a soldier. What need, Julius had said, when the only way of escape was by accident or suicide? So, free to walk the deck as he liked, Paul had found the voyage pleasant. After the winter, narrowed and tied on that dismal island, Malta, it had been cheering to feel the movement of the ship underfoot and listen to the hiss of the waves against the hull. Life was action again. Luke and Aristarchus and Paul and Julius had sat together on the slanting deck gossiping for hours, while the *Castor and Pollux*, all sails set, ran before the wind. On calmer days, when the wind fell, they had watched the long oars churn the seas as the ship beat round islands where the shadows of the clouds chased each other across the hills. They had sung with the sailors to hearten the rowers, and had whistled to bring a wind. And they had all grown to love Julius.

Julius had been in the army since he was a boy, and as a dispatch-carrier he had travelled for the legions from one end of the Empire to the other. He knew all manner of men, from the Syrians, with their habit of craft, to the formidable Britons, remotest of men. He had seen cruelties of which he hated to speak. In his youth the army discipline, though indeed it was hard enough now, had been still more severe. The soldiers had mutinied, but that, Julius said, often happened, and nobody heard of the trouble. A few men were flogged or crucified, and that was an end for the moment.

"From all I hear, they're due for another row soon.

They still flog too much. When I was a boy there was a Centurion whom they called 'Give me another,' because when he broke the stick of one whip on the back of a soldier he yelled for a new one. His men killed him, of course."

Julius didn't flog, and where he trusted he allowed liberty. But he thought freedom a luxury for civilians.

"People talk idly about the blessings of liberty," he said one day; "but if we soldiers had had liberty, who would have cleaned and repaired the irrigation canals in Egypt? Augustus did that with the army. It is the best use to which an army can be put. I hate war. It's a punishment from the gods for the wickedness of men. From all I have heard, I think Augustus hated it, too."

Like so many modern Romans, Julius spoke cynically of popular religion. To be on the safe side, he said, he was prepared to sacrifice to the gods of every nation. But he had no devotion to any one god, and when, in Malta, Paul had told him of Jesus, he had listened without conviction. He would not accept the new idea. It was not the fact of a crucified God that worried him. He had seen too many innocent men crucified for that to be a stumbling-block. His objection was that he had lived all his life under discipline, and could not conceive how order was to be kept in a cruel world under a rule of love.

"It's too soft," he said. (It was Luke who had spoken of the rule of love.) "If I'd turned my other cheek to those savages in Britain, they'd have struck off my head. When my men like me, I get more work out of them, but they've got to fear me too."

Luke had asked if he could not imagine men governed by a higher law and a more noble discipline than force, but Julius was unmoved. Love was a private affair between friends. It could not come into government, which must always rest on fear. And when Paul had tried to explain God's plan of salvation and the sacrifices of Christ for the sins of the world, Julius remained unmoved. He had always carried out orders. He took no responsibility for his sins. What murders he had done were the business of his superior officers. He himself was as humane as was wise with his inferiors. The Empire had to be kept in order, and a man who helped in that job had no time for a private life and private sins. All religions were much of a muchness.

"These fashions in gods sweep over the Empire," he had said. "My father told me that when Isis came from Egypt, Augustus would have nothing to do with her. But now, even in Rome, you can see processions of her dog-faced worshippers. Your God Jehovah has had his turn, too, and now here's this new God Christ."

"Christ was the messenger of God," Luke said, and Paul added:

"He is the Son of the Most High God."

"Then he's not your God's equal?" Julius asked.

"He's His son," Paul repeated.

Julius nodded.

"It's not for us to fix their rank. We must respect them all. But to deify a man doesn't make him immortal. They made a God of Augustus, and he's long since dead. Your Jesus is dead too, and Tiberius. Claudius has gone,

and Caligula also, and now I suppose we shall worship Nero in Rome."

"Never!" Paul replied, and Julius stared.

"Why not?" he asked. "It's only to show you are a good citizen. You needn't believe it."

That talk had got into a tangle. When Paul had tried to explain that Jesus was still alive, Julius had taken that for granted. Of course the breed of gods was immortal. But he could not accept the idea of Jehovah as the one and only God. Every nation must have its god. Luke had soon abandoned the attempt to explain, and was content to show friendship to Julius. But Paul's mind beat for a time against the insensibility of the Roman before he too gave it up. No new idea could get beneath the mental skin of the Centurion. He saw godhead as a reward given to man by man, or as a compliment bestowed on a hero by the gods themselves. Luke's idea of a pitiful God who had come to earth to teach men a higher way of living, or Paul's plan of salvation, were both incredible to Julius, whose mind hardened by rough experience, was impervious to new thoughts. He was a man of action, and not a philosopher. The Centurion had finished that talk by saying:

"There are savages in the Empire who would not bother us so much if Augustus still had his hand on them. It is only fear that keeps barbarians in order. In Alexandria the people built a Temple to him and kept it at their own charges. Everyone who burns incense there has an awe of Augustus. Even though he's dead they think

he's a god whose arm still reaches far. It's a useful belief. You build the Temple first, then the awe comes."

"Herod built a temple to Augustus, but the Jews won't worship there," Paul returned.

"You have a special license to worship your own God. You aren't good citizens, and we'll never make soldiers of you," Julius had replied kindly.

"It's because of our Sabbath. We worship God then," Paul explained, but Julius knew all about that.

"You can't let a soldier idle one day in seven. You'd soon have no army left," he retorted.

After that Paul and Luke both felt that only time could convert Julius. He was not a man whose mind could be taken by assault. So the talk on board had been mostly gossip.

The passage to Syracuse had been good, and they had stayed there three days. Then they had crossed the Silician Strait to Rhegium, where, after a day's delay, they had caught the south wind which was now blowing them up to Puteoli. Perhaps as they stood together now on the ship, watching the coast of Italy draw near, Julius recalled something of these talks, for he said suddenly:

"You know that over there in Puteoli the sailors who plied to Alexandria once came to Augustus and, dressed in their feast clothes, offered to burn incense before him. Thanks to him, they said, they could live and go on their voyages in peace. Thanks to him, they could enjoy freedom and make fortunes. But Augustus deserved his god-

ship. He put down pirates and brigands, and his good government brought trade and prosperity. You'll understand when you see Puteoli."

The harbour was full of shipping. Some fishing-boats were putting out to sea. On the *Castor and Pollux* the sailors began to strike sail. The canvas came down with a flop on the deck, the oars were untriced, and in a moment the rowers were pulling towards the wharf as if for a wager, avoiding the round, heavy merchant ships and the tow barges. Julius pointed out to Paul the warships and the Admiral's flagship, with its heavy purple sail furled. A few skiffs with bright-coloured sails were racing across the bay towards Caligula's ridiculous bridge of boats between Puteoli and Baiae, with the houses decaying on its three-mile length. The Puteoli end rested on the mole built on arches of a red earth mixed with chalk, which formed a cement that in water hardened to stone and never wore out.

"Caligula gave a dinner when he opened that bridge, and then threw half his guests into the sea," Julius said, with a snort. "He wore our boots when he was a boy in the army, but he soon stepped out of them into his own madness. I suppose the cohort murdered him, but their tribune got the credit."

There was a crowd on the wharf to see the ship come in, and as she came to her place some of the soldiers of Claudius' fire brigade stood by and looked with interest at the passengers.

"I must tie you up now," Julius said, and called to the soldier on guard. The handcuffs were brought, and one

was snapped on Paul's wrist and the other on the wrist of the soldier. A light chain between bound them together. Paul was a prisoner again. On Julius' orders the soldiers collected their military equipment and Paul's companions their meagre luggage, and soon they were all ashore. When Julius had them safely landed, he took off his battered, high-crested helmet and wiped his brow.

"I am glad to see the end of the brothers with the hats," he said, glancing back at the figure-head. "I must have a shave before I report to the General here. After that we will feed."

Paul, too, would have liked to go to the baths and wash the dirt and sweat out of his hair and beard. He would have liked to put on clean linen clothes under his soiled cloak. But Julius dare not allow him any liberty here, in a town where there was a garrison and superior officers, whose orders he must accept.

"You shall wash in the first stream we come to," he said.

So Luke, with Aristarchus, who was not an Imperial prisoner as Paul was, went off to the bath, and Paul, linked to his soldier, was left behind on the wharf. There was plenty to see. The wharf was stacked with goods. Paul could smell the stench from the medicinal mineral springs which attracted so many invalids. But the lack of freedom irked him almost to madness. To have each bodily action in common with his guard, like two goats tied together, was intolerable. If Paul wanted to eat or walk or wash, the soldier must come too. To any Jew brought up fastidiously, Paul saw, the fight with inborn

habits would be hard. Washing was difficult. Ceremonial cleansing was impossible. In any case, there was no water on the mole. The customs which you had to fall into when you were so close to another man were sordid and evil. . . . This might last for months or years! Paul tried to withdraw his mind from insufferable outside conditions into prayer and acceptance of what God sent. As he did so, suddenly he realised that the chain that fastened the soldier to him also fastened him to the soldier. (Hope and fear kept step together.) The guard might hate his fetter, too. Paul saw that he must subdue his disgust, and by courtesy cover the ugliness. Courtesy could make even sordid things beautiful, and by striving for it you made a solitude in your mind in which you could take refuge. The mental effort would wipe out the feeling of disgust. So Paul suggested to his guard that they might walk up and down and look at the sights, and the soldier agreed.

Puteoli was the largest and busiest port in Italy. Iron ore was shipped from Elba, and a vast host of workmen made it into arms and implements, mattsacks, sickles, helmets, swords, shields and knives. But Julius had told Paul that Puteoli never sent out as much as she brought in. The ships from Alexandria and Asia brought so many luxuries from India and Syria, as well as the corn that fed the Romans, that they always drew out of harbour lighter than they had put in.

The quays were piled with fuel, and in a shop near the inn they stopped to watch the smiths blow up the furnace. It was good to see that work again, and a Roman at it.

In Syria, Paul told the smith, only gypsies were smiths. Close by were lead water-pipes, and the smith, in his turn, explained to Paul that seven hundred slaves were kept to care for the public supply of water. The plumbers made pipes of rolled plates of lead and soldered them. Paul and his guard were good friends with the smith by the time that Luke and Aristarchus came back, clean and comfortable, from the bath. Close on their heels Julius arrived, with the rest of the guard.

The Centurion's chin was scored with his shave, and his coarse, sandy hair cut short. His ragged beard had gone and his long moustache was draped, as it has been in Caesarea when he first took charge of Paul, in two curved cascades that enclosed and almost hid his chin.

Julius had had his orders, and he was in a hurry, but he had time to criticise the inhabitants of Puteoli.

"I don't think much of the barbers here," he said. "There was a female hair-cutter, but she certainly didn't cut hair. I would have none of her. I found a man. He wasn't much, but at least he made me clean. The General was angry because I had lost all my papers in that cursed shipwreck. . . . As if I could help it! We are to proceed to Rome at once. The orders are to lose no more time. You are the Emperor's prisoner, and if your accusers have arrived before us there may be a row. But we have time for a meal . . . the first comfortable one we have had for months!"

Julius looked round him. He did not want to go to the inn near the quays, for such wine shops were little more than brothels. But there was not a more respectable

place. Tiberius, it seemed, had forbidden cooked food to be sold in these inns. Claudius had commanded them to be shut up altogether, but that had never been done. Now under Nero they could at least get cooked vegetables, and even prohibited meat. So they went into the inn. It was a rough place. A blowsy woman blew up the log in the smoke-blackened fireplace and then broke up some firewood to heat the pipkins on the hearth. In a moment, it seemed, she had a meal on the three-legged table. A good smell rose from under the lids of the pipkins. The smaller one was full of beans and the larger of kid and herbs. She placed wine before them in a bowl of red clay, and they drank out of beechwood cups. The three-legged table rocked a little on the uneven floor and the woman thrust a postherd under it. There were only stools to sit on. The other customers, who were mostly slaves and men of the lower classes, wore cloaks with hoods pulled over their heads. The doors were shut and they ate in secret, for behind the wine-shop, Julius said, was the brothel.

The food was good, but when they had eaten and the time came to pay, Julius beat down the woman's price. He told her she had all the low instincts of an innkeeper and was as clever as a clothes-stealer at the baths. She only stared, and took what he offered. Many centurions would have given nothing.

The party collected outside the inn, and Julius saw that each man's load was adjusted and his weapon ready.

"And now for Rome," he said, and marched his pris-

oner, with Luke and Aristarchus and the guards off the quays.

Julius had decided to march by way of Cumae, avoiding Capua, which he said was too luxurious, and full of important people. The sea road was only a track but it was good enough for them, and would take less time. If they went by this less-frequented way he could now and then unlock the handcuff which bound Paul to his guard. Once out of the towns there would be nobody to see.

"If we meet a Senator or a Magistrate we'll see his escort first, and if he notices you are free and complains, I'll say we can't walk quickly enough on a rough road with a prisoner tied up, and that we have enough guards to prevent an escape."

Leisure had come to an end with the voyage. Now Julius said hurry must run like a red thread through every day.

"We'll have to eat the miles between here and Rome."

It was late spring, and the country was in flower. The weather was fine and the skies were blue. All the way north from Puteoli, past Baiae to Cumae, the coast was covered by palaces and villas built by Emperors and nobles. All wealthy Rome came here to drink the mineral waters. The land by the sea was entirely given over to gardens. There was no agriculture except that of luxury farms and vegetable gardens. The climate was soft, and near Cumae, where the warm baths were, though the hills were steep, even under a blazing sun there was always a refreshing breeze from the sea. Many of the villas were built on the rocks right out into the sea, which wash-

ed up, breaking peacefully, with a soft splash, at the edge of the walls of their wonderful gardens. They were pilared and porticoed, and had a finish not often seen in Judea or even near Tarsus. In Judea and Galilee the houses were built for strength. They were solid and thick and high, though even their strength was often not enough to outlast a raid, and a pile of ruined walls was sometimes all that was left for the traveller to gaze on. But long peace had made an art of architecture in Italy, and even where the soil was barren and dry, the gardens were green with box trees and the paths shaded by straight rows of cypress trees, which looked like lines of green, folded banners on poles.

Paul had no fear of the result of his trial. He was a citizen of the Empire, and in the Provinces he had always admired its Governments. He loved the Roman feeling for law and order. He respected and admired their justice and their judgment. They never fell over one another, foaming with emotion, as the Eastern races did. They had the power to wait and listen. The tribunal at Corinth was typical of their administration. There Gallio had held the scales of justice evenly. He had ruled out a religious fight that did not come within his jurisdiction. Such quarrels were not recognised by Roman law. They meant nothing to Gallio. The Tribunal at Rome would be as aloof and as just. So, without anxiety, Paul felt free to enjoy the journey.

It was a long walk but it was through Italy, the heart of the civilised world. Paul and his companions had walked so often over the coast roads of Roman Asia that gen-

erally they knew what they were going to see, but here everything was new. For the first time they were seeing the Romans in their own home. The order and care all around charmed Paul. Julius made no comment on his outspoken admiration, except that once he said:

"These gardens are not agriculture. It used to be a compliment to tell a man that he was a good agriculturist. You were hanged if you pastured cattle secretly at night on unripe corn, or cut it for their food. But in those days the corn produced by Italy was enough to feed us all. Now we depend for our very existence on Egypt, and they don't hang you even for murder."

And when Luke, who noticed everything, pointed out in a gay garden a few late hyacinths, Julius rejoined:

"They'll soon be dead. Nothing that isn't watered by slaves lives through the summer heat here, except trees. If the sun gets warmer we'll have to travel by night and eat by day, like cattle in hot countries. I like to walk and watch the stars shine in the deep blue sky. You feel free then."

They struck into the Appian Way at Sinuessa on the edge of Campania. Sinuessa had a good harbour and was of some commercial importance, and from it the Appian Way went north to Rome and south to Capua. The road was now a good one of blocks so well put together that there was no gap between. It was hard on the feet, so when they could they walked off the hard pavement on the softer ground. But the Centurion told them to stick to the stones of the road. It hurt your feet, to be sure, but in the long run you found it less tiring than the

earth at the side. "And I know," he added. "I've spent my life on my feet . . . I've walked through Gaul. I've walked through Briton and Spain and Syria. And now I'm walking again in Italy. And not liking it as I ought!"

At Formiae, inside a corner of the gulf of Gaeta, Cicero had once lived. His villa was still to be seen. Paul had heard of his grandeur when he was Governor of Cilicia, and now Julius told of his death there by the sea when he had tried to escape after the murder of Caesar. When his enemies came upon him his soldiers had wanted to defend him, but he had forbidden them to fight. They were out-numbered, and it was useless to waste their lives, too, he said. The soldiers of Antony had torn him from his litter and cut off his head and his hands. They had sent them to Rome, where Antony, about to make an oration, had ordered his servants to nail them to the Rostra . . . that platform decorated with the beaks of ships taken in war . . . from which Cicero had so often delighted people with his eloquence.

"It was no work for a soldier," Julius said curtly, and no man contradicted him.

Julius was brooding as they walked, but it was not until the gardens had been left behind, and in the volcanic fertile plain where the Apennines swept round in a circle and the agriculture became a real growth of corn and olives vines and fruit trees, that he burst out, as if something volcanic in him, too, had boiled up into expression. Here men in leg fetters were tilling the ground with heavy mattocks. In some places slow-moving steers, their necks beneath curved yokes, were ploughing for a sum-

mer crop the fallow left from last year. The slaves who were working in the vines that grew up the elm-tree supports were fettered so heavily that they could scarcely walk and could never run away. Some of them were digging trenches for next year's vines, cutting them four feet every way, digging with difficulty, their leg irons clanking against their limbs and bruising them as they worked. It was at this that Julius burst out:

"I've heard my father say that in old days even Generals ploughed their own land with a laurel wreath on the plough. Anyhow, they worked as hard as they did at war. Now you never see a gentleman at the plough. Only these slaves in leg irons and men with branded faces carry hoes, and carry them unwillingly. They are in and out of the whipping-house every day. I know something of agriculture. I was brought up on a farm. My father thought it no shame to work with a hoe or drive laggard oxen with the goad. I've seen him carry home a ewe lamb or young goat forgotten by its dam and left alone. He planted orchard trees and vines with his own hand. But look how everything is neglected now. There are only slaves in the fields. Nobody else tills the land. You can see how badly the vineyards are cleared. We used to do it with curved rakes. We'd soon have thinned the shade of those elms with our pruner's hooks. Grapes that ripen under heavy leaves are sour. We used to tear up the soil with an ox and a sharp share. Now red rust must be creeping over hundreds of deserted ploughs."

Once when they passed a garland lying on an old tree stock, and further on saw a spikey wreath hung on a

milestone at a crossway, Luke noticed how faded they were, and Julius broke out again :

"They are neglecting the gods, too, and getting irreligious. In my youth we would not as much as taste the corn when newly cut, or even take a mouthful of new wine before the priests had offered the first-fruits to Ceres."

"I thought you didn't care about all that?" Luke inquired.

"I don't when I live in towns or in camps. In the country I feel differently. If Ceres exists, how can she help being indignant with such ingratitude? We had a wooden god at home, poorly dressed. He stood in a narrow shrine by the door. . . . No man can help going back to his childhood when he thinks of the Lares of his fathers!"

The traffic was growing thicker. Every now and then they met a litter with a string of attendants, and inside a wealthy Roman going south for his health. Paul noticed that the litter-bearers were often black, and that some nobles had black outriders also. Sometimes a cohort of Roman Knights passed on horseback, with a few mounted archers. There were long-haired dandies and gentlemen with bushy beards whom Julius said were Northerners.

"They are all going to cure the diseases they nourish by over-eating in Rome. Not one of them has ever worked for a living," he added sourly.

They passed wheeled carts with heavy loads and gangs of slaves with shackles on their hands. One of these had

long red marks across his face, and the Centurion pointed him out.

"That one's mistress has been angry with him," he said. "I knew a General's wife like that. She had a black heart, and when anger swept her along like a swollen torrent I've seen her slaves' arms scratched by hairpins. If one tore her hair by accident when dressing it she'd snatch up a pin and wound the slave in return."

The number of slaves they met astonished Julius. They were everywhere, with brands on their foreheads and shackles on their legs.

"And they have children by the dozen! They breed their young faster than we kill ours off. It's a danger! If they revolt again Roman civilisation will go to pieces."

At this Luke said thoughtfully:

"The test of a civilisation is what it takes for granted . . . slavery and child murder, floggings and crucifixions; luxury and corruption. . . ." He stopped, with a glance at Julius. But the Centurion was not offended. For to him, returning from a long exile, the country was new as it was to Paul and Luke and Aristarchus.

"The Romans are their own greatest enemies," he commented, "They are always either cruel or too indulgent. They have been terrified of their slaves ever since the rebellion. They still talk of that in the legions. Italy was laid bare from the Alps to Sicily. A gladiator led the slaves. He had been a shepherd, and they stole him and sold him to a trainer for the circus . . ." Julius paused and frowned. Then he said slowly:

"When I was a boy, I knew an old man who had seen

the punishment. The crosses with the decaying bodies of the crucified slaves made a track of cruelty right across the land. They have not done it again."

"The slaves or the masters?" Luke asked.

"Neither," Julius replied.

"We will stop such things," Luke said, and Julius stared at him.

"You don't mean to say that because you have found a new God our rulers will cease to punish rebellion?"

"It's not the new God, but the message he brought." Luke's blue eyes shone in his sunburnt face.

"What message?" Julius had forgotten their talks on the ship.

"That such things need not be," Luke replied calmly.

"But if the only way to keep slaves in order is to terrify them. . . ." Julius stopped. It was evident that he was puzzled. But Paul, much though he loved Luke, did not agree either.

"There must be punishment. Authority was given by God," he said, and at that Julius prophesied gloomily.

"There is sure to be another revolt. Look at the races we have here. Phrygians, Lydians, Cappadocians, Bithynians and Arabians with their bored ears, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Greeks and Italians, Syrians and Libyans, Cilicians, Bactrians, Scythians, Persians and Indians. The Emperor himself has a German guard. Spaniards and Britons. . . . Syria and Asia breed civilised men, but the others are barbarians."

At first Paul had drawn no conclusions from the sights by the way. He was gathering up impressions. But after

this passage between Julius and Luke he began to compare his ideal Italy with the Italy he saw. He walked and listened to the comments of the Centurion and asked himself questions. In the provinces Roman law was a refuge for the oppressed. If the provincial Roman kept order by severity, at least he himself had learnt self-discipline. But here? Another atmosphere lay over Italy. Was the Government of Italy just and law-abiding, or was it autocracy pure and simple? Had the old, hard Roman vanished from the world? These new rich lived on the backs of their slaves. All opposition to their will must be eliminated. It was an impossible way to rule. Even God, who is all-powerful, is pitiful too, and provides loopholes for the unruly will. . . . For the moment Paul tried to reserve judgment on what he saw. You could not know a people by one journey through their country. If Italy were as wicked as she seemed. . . . God had sent him here with a purpose. Perhaps a new life was needed as much as a new creed?

They were getting near Rome. They had passed citadels and Temples and rivers and marshes, sacred groves and shrines. They could not carry the memory of so many wonders in their minds. But there was one place which Paul did not forget. It was at Aricia, sixteen miles from Rome, where a lake, deep in the valley, was enclosed by a dark wood, which Julius said had always been full of sacred and ancient religious awe. There was a pebbly stream, often almost dry, and near by the grove of Diana. Her priest, Julius told them, went always with drawn sword. He was a run-away slave who killed his predeces-

sor in single combat. Any slave who broke off a branch from a golden oak in the sacred grove had a right to fight the priest who held the office. Each priest perished in succession, as his forerunner had perished before him. It was a comment made by Julius that fixed this place in Paul's memory.

"It shows what a slave's life must be, when he prefers to prow! round with a sword day and night rather than live with his master!"

The Centurion would not stay at Aricia. "There are always beggars round these shrines," he said, "and they are always half starved. I once saw an old woman in the graveyard grab baked meat from the very pyre. A loaf roled down from the fire, and she ran after it, and the undertaker's shaved slave thumped her for it. Anyhow we must hurry to Rome."

So they pushed on to Albanium, and rested there for the night.

It was at dawn when they had sailed into Puteoli. It was dawn when they sighted Rome. As they saw the sun rise in splendour, "A good omen," Julius said again.

Paul, rested after a night's sleep, stared round him with curiosity. Rome, built on its cluster of steep hills, stood in a well-watered plain in the middle of small fields and moist meadows and fair acres of cultivated land that lead directly to the sea. There was room for expansion all round, and in the distance the Apennine and Alban Hills sheltered it. This was the greatest city in the world, the centre of the greatest civilisation. What would it do to him? What should he do to it?

They marched up the Appian Way, walking between rows of trees with new green leaves, and here and there small temples and tombs, and once or twice a long stone coffin with a heavy lid.

They passed the shops where women were already at work spinning. Paul could see the distaffs wrapped in soft wool, and hands lightly drawing out the thread and twisting it. Some spinners had bitten-off ends of wool on their lips, and each worker had at her feet soft fleeces of the shining wool in baskets of osier. But Paul knew all that. He had often seen it before.

In Rome itself the citizens were buried in sleep. Cocks were crowing. The smell of extinguished torches still hung in the air of the streets and mingled with the clean fresh breezes of dawn, but all the great doors of the houses were shut. The city, in the magical light of dawn seemed under a spell, deserted by its people. In the middle of the road outside a heavy bronze door a chaplet of flowers lay withering on the grey pavement. The Centurion nodded.

He must have been very drunk when he dropped his garland . . . with wine or love. Oh, dear! When I think of my own grizzled hair! . . . The age for soldiering is the age for loving. War and love are unseemly in the old. . . . Here I am back in Rome after years with barbarians, but the pith has gone out of me, and I don't even desire to put my aged neck into the halter of Venus."

Inside one half-open door Paul saw a chained slave who dozed in the passage. As the escort, proud of their traveled appearance, and exhilarated by their home-com-

ing, clanked past, he stirred in his sleep, waked and yawned, and Paul heard the clink of his fetters.

Rome was waking up. A detachment of soldiers appeared at the end of the street. They marched past, and Paul saw that they escorted a half-naked man who carried a blood-stained whip.

"The torturer!" Paul's guard whispered. They passed, and a group of men with chalk marks on their feet came out of a side street . . . slaves going to be offered for sale. Further on near the slaves' platform, a fussy auctioneer awaited his new lots. The butchers had opened their stalls, and jewelers and merchants were arranging their wares, setting up in rows the little gods who were protectors of the hearth and stable and gardens. A low-looking man, like a buffoon, strolled up from the Tiber, and called out sleepily that he bartered sulphur matches for broken glass. The merchants did not even turn their heads.

Julius gave a short, sharp order, and the guard turned to the east towards the precincts of the Emperor's palace, where Paul was to lodge. They had come to the end of their journey.

XXI

AND, after all, there had been no need for hurry. When the Centurion handed Paul over to the Prefect of the Prætorian Guard he was told that the witnesses had not yet come from Judea. So there was nothing to do but wait. Paul was allowed to live alone, save for his guard, inside the precincts of the palace of Nero.

“For two whole years he stayed in a house which he rented for himself, welcoming all who came to see him, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ, with perfect fearlessness, unmolested.”

This is what Luke wrote. But he said nothing of how he himself became Paul’s eyes and ears, and he never mentioned the slaves.

The Christians in Rome were a small community. They had been there for some years, and had had many ups and downs. Sympathetic Jews who traded with Judea had first brought word that Messiah had come. Other Jews in Rome had refused to accept the new creed, and the Jews in Roman Asia had spread their tales for and against it. This had led to so much disturbance that Claudius had banished all the Jews, Christians and orthodox, from Italy. After the murder of the Emperor the

Jews had drifted back to Rome, and there were as many there now as ever. But Rome was the meeting-place of the whole civilised world. Ninety out of every hundred of its population were foreigners. No city in the world was so extravagant, and in none were the inhabitants so heedless and foolish. For years past the country districts had been taxed to support idle and luxurious rulers. Their life was built on the tied life of the slaves. In Rome, as in the country, there was beauty and order. There were carefully built villas with arched gateways, and gardens with fruit-trees and vines. Inside the gates there might be order and beauty, but outside lay ignorance and poverty and vice.

None of the houses in Rome were high. Augustus had forbidden any building to be more than seventy feet in height. The poor lived in crowded tenements whose windows almost touched across narrow, dirty streets where the smell of old fish-bones and egg shells and decaying onion and fruit skins mingled with rancid frying-oil and cheese and made a horrible way for sightseers to pass through. Outside these quarters, where the free working-men lived, were public buildings and Temples, and palaces where rich men lived with their hundreds of slaves, who were better housed and had more food than the free poor.

Paul only knew all this by hearsay. It was Luke who wandered round the city and brought back accounts of what the place was like. The poor quarters were mostly on the other side of the Tiber. Here, in steaming food-shops, hoarse-voiced men carved round, smoking sau-

sages and sold boiled peas and beans for a penny a plate. But few of the poor had a penny. Luke had seen branded slaves eat, but he thought that the free man had to content himself with a few olives and a crust of bread.

Paul listened to Luke, too, when he told of what he saw of the culture of Rome, which, like the luxury, had nothing to do with the slaves or working-men. Luke himself was a writer, so he was interested in the making and selling of books. There was a book-shop opposite Cæsar's Forum, he told Paul, whose pillars, on either side of the door, were covered with the titles of books. Some of these could actually be bought at a cost of five denarii, but these were few. The others were expensive books, well smoothed with pumice stone, and adorned with decorations in purple. They were not written . . . as Luke's own book's had to be . . . on old scraps of parchment or on rotten wooden tablets covered with old colourless wax. They were copied on imperial paper, with new rolls and new bosses, and tied with red ties. But they had never been made for slaves or poor men. The men who lounged reading in the shop . . . sometimes looking forward to the last page and yawning . . . were dressed in scarlet cloaks and fine woolen tunics. Their scarlet shoes were laced up the leg in the latest fashion. What had their culture to do with the life of the slave?

Though Paul had no liberty to roam, so many people passed to and fro daily through the precincts of the palace, absorbed in their own business, that, watching them, he could see for himself without the use of Luke's eyes, the two worlds in Rome. In the world of the rich

some were gay and idle, some were profligate, effeminate or diseased, but there were others strong and energetic, who might have worked in politics and government, but who, under the eye of an Emperor each year becoming more irresponsible and immoral, were growing more and more lax and more and more luxurious.

Sometimes Paul saw wonderful furniture carried from one part of the Palace to another by slaves with long hair. He saw tables with feet of Indian ivory, and white couches with the arms carved in figures, which contrasted with the rude pallets on which he and Luke slept. A woman with false curled hair would be carried past in litter, and his guard would tell Paul she had got it from Germany.

"We cut off their hair when we conquer them, and lead them in triumphs, and the Roman women buy it for wigs," he said, laughingly.

Paul often saw men, too, with dyed hair, in white robes with crimson borders and rose-coloured bands on their elderly heads, go past to banquets. Some of the Senators wore sad-coloured coats, and others dressed in scarlet and amethyst, but there were also men who passed in dirty togas and still dirtier cloaks, whose shoes showed signs of having been sewn up time after time. There was no difference in dress between slave and free. It was not safe, Julius, who often came to see Paul, told him, to emphasise the difference, and let the slaves find out that they were one in four of the population of Rome.

"Freedmen are everywhere too," Julius, who knew Paul liked to hear about the Romans, went on. "You can

see them at the games, sitting on the front benches. I saw one the other day. He had a sardonyx ring on his hand, and his cloak was dyed with Tyrian dye. Under it he wore a toga like snow! He smelt of all the essences from the perfumer's shop. Every hair had been twitched out of his arms. They were sleek and polished. But he had patches on his forehead like stars! If you'd pulled them off you'd have seen the letters branded there."

"Where do all the slaves come from?" Paul asked, and Julius answered that it was impossible to say. Decent citizens disappeared when traveling, and were heard of no more. From distant parts of the Empire stolen men were shipped to remote estates. Children who would otherwise have been exposed and left to die as food for wild beasts or birds of prey, were rescued and sold to dealers. Parents openly sold their children, and creditors sold their debtors, and thousands were born into slavery. No matter how slaves were made there was no shortage in the supply! The greatest number came from the East. They were Syrians and Persians. The Centurion's hard, sandy face broke into a smile.

"I've given you that list before," he said. But he gave it again. "Phrygians, Lydians, Cappadocians, Bithynians, Arabians, Spaniards and Britons, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Germans and Greeks and Italians, Syrians and Libyans, Cilicians, Bactrians, Scythians, Persians and Indians." Then he added: "You can see the danger to Rome. We used to be liberty-giving and law-loving, but now we are lax. We give freedom to thousands. Most slaves are born from races as good as ours, and when they

are set up in business by their masters, and get a percentage of their profits, they can get rich and buy themselves off. It's obvious that the Government is influenced by so many freedmen though mostly they belong to passionate races who have never learnt how to govern themselves. There will soon be no true Romans left. They are too liberal in freeing them. The Emperor himself gives away slaves as I might give olives. He frees them if they applaud his verse, but he has so many that he can never notice their loss."

In former times . . . Julius went back to his old complaint . . . not only philosophers, but Emperors gloried in the small number of slaves they owned, but now the Romans had grown too soft to work. The old Roman, hard-sinewed and able, had gone for ever.

"They rule them by terror," Julius said. But masters were forbidden to send their slaves at their own discretion to fight in the arena. Complaints against slaves must be examined first by a magistrate. Of course a master could put his slave to death, but he must do it privately, and not by handing him over to the beasts. To prevent conspiracy, or another rebellion, there was a law that if an owner was murdered by a slave, all the slaves in the same household were put to death.

"Rome will fall if the slaves are freed, it will fall if they increase," Julius concluded. "What are we to do? There is sure to be butchery on both sides, and then the barbarians will rise and conquer us."

Soon after this talk an event happened which caused as much excitement as if Rome had burst into flames.

Pedanius Secundus, the City Prefect, was murdered by one of his slaves. He had been a rich man, and had owned four hundred slaves, men, women and children. Were they all to die? The Senate debated. Outside the Curia the crowd gathered, angry, and demanding mercy. The law was inhuman and must not be carried out. But inside the Senate house an old Senator urged that if they set aside the law no master would be safe. Were they not to be allowed to do what they liked with their own property?

Luke brought all the gossip to Paul, who, accustomed to the merciful Jewish regulation of slavery, followed the case with indignant warmth. All the poorer people in Rome were boiling over with similar feelings. Were slaves to be considered human or animals only? Were men to be property like cattle, or had they any rights of their own? The number and wealth of the freedmen showed that they could make money and have power. While they were slaves they were under drastic laws. But as soon as they were freed they became Romans. Could a law make such a difference? When the Senate decided that the slaves were to die a rumor spread amongst the indignant mob that there was to be an appeal to the Emperor, or rather, in the first instance, to the City Prefect. But what use would that be, some of Paul's friends insisted, when the Prefects were men like Pedanius? He must have deserved his fate. Perhaps the Emperor would show mercy? He was supposed to object to capital punishment.

The appeal to Nero was made, and the crowd waited in hope of the result. But Nero refused to intervene, nay,

more, he lent the Imperial Guard to line the streets on the day when the four hundred, men, women and wailing children, went to their deaths. Slaves, it was clear, had no rights. What did it matter what Pedanius Secundus had done to his? The Senate would leave no loophole for rebellion. One Senator actually proposed in the Senate that all the slaves whom Pedanius had freed should be killed, but Nero forbade that outright.

And nothing happened. In a few days it all seemed forgotten, except that Paul realised that his mind had slowly changed. He had always known that power misused bred rebellion, just as virility misused bred impotence, but he had often excused the vices of the Romans by pleading with himself that the Roman fair-mindedness balanced it. But he had not such a great idea of Roman justice now. There was nothing like coming to see for yourself. . . . What was in God's mind about their vice? Surely He would punish injustice and impurity. . . . In Rome there was no merciful seventh year and no Jubilee, when wretched slaves must be freed. Under the Judaistic Law no man, unless by his own will, could be a slave for life, and his master was forbidden to rule over him with rigour. Jehovah was the only God who was kind. His laws were based on justice between man and man, and knowledge of how much misery men could stand.

So Paul encouraged the slaves and poor working men to visit him. He had freedom to do as he pleased. The Jews, overwhelmed by the number of creeds in Rome and taught a lesson by their banishment, did not bother much

about the new revelation. It was to the poorer classes and the slaves that Paul, in his low-roofed house in the precincts of Nero's palace, felt he had something to tell that was of real importance. He soon saw that, as Peter had once sneered, slaves were to be his chief disciples in Rome.

When Paul had been in Roman Asia he had often met people of the high world and learned men. He had once had a dream that if the rich and learned could be converted the world would soon follow. But his dreams had been torn from him by life. In Athens the dream that the clever would accept his revelation had vanished, and now the dream that the great might follow was also going. In Rome, poor and a prisoner, he was daily sinking to the level of slaves. God did not work as man did. His values were different. Men would undertake great journeys to make money, while for everlasting life they would not put a foot to the ground, but God took the weak things of the world, and confounded the strong by His use of them.

In this change of mind Luke had influenced Paul, for he put things before him in a new way. As he wrote his book about Jesus, he talked about it. Luke had not known Jesus well. He had always been inclined to Judaism, and had followed at a distance. But even then he had thought Jesus the greatest Jew he had ever known.

It was his teaching, Luke told Paul, that had first made him think of Jesus as more than man, for how could a mere man come by such thoughts? Other men take cruelty for granted, and think it right that they should always fight for their own way.

"Look at the world as it is," Luke said, "and think of what Jesus said and did. He knew some thing that we don't."

It was what Peter and Mary and Barnabas had all said, but Paul could talk to Luke as he had never been able to talk to them. Luke spoke the same language of the mind. He was educated Gentile, and Paul respected his intellect. Luke did not question Paul's revelation. He thought it fitted in with the teaching of Judaism and was necessary to lift the weight of so many gods with so many rituals from daily life. But salvation to Luke was not what it was to Paul . . . the gift of eternal life. Luke said it was the gift of a new heart. When he recalled the stories he had heard of Jesus and the little he himself had seen, he and Paul discussed their meaning, and now Paul did not think the tales Jesus had been so fond of telling childish, as he had done when Mary had spoken of them. Luke always came back to the new life that must spring from the new heart, and how it was to be lived.

"People always hate humbugs," Luke said. "But nobody can go on hating real goodness. Jesus saw the other man's point of view as well as he could see it for himself. That was why no one who really knew him could stand against him. His goodness was sympathy and understanding. You see," Luke went on, "good and bad spread like plagues by infection. Most righteous men try to repress the bad, but Jesus seemed to think that a mistake. The bad is often not all bad, but only a form of self-assertion. You may do great harm by interfering with a soul you are not qualified to doctor. It is easy to injure it by

sheer ignorance if you make it shut itself up against you and lie in self-defense."

Brains to Luke were like wealth. Very pleasant to have, he said, but you can find God without either. And creeds, he said, were made by brains. If behind them you found God, they were good. Ritual, even, might make you think you were in the presence of the gods, as the Greeks and Romans believed, but if in that presence you did not find your fellow-creatures, you had not found God. . . . God and man. . . . Perhaps they are the same, Luke meditated.

"Take your Jewish ritual, of which I have heard so much," he said. "Think of the sound of the silver trumpets, the smell of incense and the feeling of your Holy of Holies empty because there is no other way to symbolise the presence of God. And then think how, outside, the poor frightened beasts are tied to the golden horns for the butchery of the altar. Only savages could worship God like that. And this same costly ritual is going on in all the temples of Rome and outside there are slaves everywhere and unbelievable cruelties! Surely men will soon see how they mock God?"

Paul recalled that horrible smell in the Temple and the heap of blood-stained salt. Then his thoughts went on to Barnabas, to Mary and Peter. . . . Peter, stupid Peter! had he been trying to express something too great for him to put into words?

Luke did not admire Peter. He thought him a narrow Jew who had tried to limit the good news to his own race. Jesus had begun his work by trying to make the people

of Nazarus tolerant, but he had soon given that up. He had proclaimed in Nazareth the good news of release to the captives and of sight for the blind and liberty for the oppressed, but he had ended by telling the Jews there, that of the lepers in Israel in the time of the Prophet Elisha the only one who had been made clean was a Gentile, not a Jew. How, after that, could Peter and James make the good news into a message for Jews alone?

Luke knew all about Peter's denial of Jesus, but he did not want to put it in his book, for it showed that the Christians were not united, but when he and Paul had talked it over they decided that the new Churches ought to know of the weaknesses of their leaders.

"I will put in yours, too, Paul, when I finish my other book," Luke said. He was very honest. And Paul agreed. So Luke put the denial into his book, and as he was sorry for Peter, he put in his repentance also. And in one story after another he wrote down Peter's boastfulness and his self-complacency and his stupidity. He told how he and the other disciples had so often misunderstood the teaching of Jesus, and had never seen how great it was. He told of the day when the woman had touched the cloak of Jesus and he had felt his healing power go from him, and how Peter had snubbed him and asked him how was it possible that in a crowd like that he could know such a thing? It was Peter who had put Jesus on a level with Moses and Elias, not seeing how much greater his Master was. The disciples, too, had quarrelled about who was to be greatest in the Kingdom. Even John had not understood, for he had forbidden others not of their party to do

good. Jesus had rebuked them then. He had rebuked them when they asked for vengeance to be called down from Heaven on an unbelieving village. He had not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them, he had said. But it was Peter who always asked the stupid, uncomprehending questions. Peter who always showed that he did not quite believe, Peter who boasted that he had left all his property to follow Jesus, Peter who in the end had denied that he had ever known Jesus.

Luke wrote much of the teachings of Jesus in the words of the Law, and Paul helped him with the quotations. He showed, too, with what insistence Jesus had preached a new life, pressing it on people, never wavering in asserting that it was a revelation from God. He had told Peter he would make him into a fisher of men, but Peter had only tried to fish for his own nation. Jesus had enlarged even the limits of his family, for he had said that every one who did God's will was his brother or mother or sister. Luke recalled how Jesus had said that God clothed the lilies of the field and gave the ravens their feathers, but even in the last days his disciples had not understood his faith in God's guidance. The dispute as to who was to be the greatest had again broken out, and this time Jesus had not only told them that he who thought least of himself was the greatest. He had gone still further, and said that the greatest would have as little honour as the meanest, and that he himself had come amongst them as a servant. He had warned Peter that his faith might fail, but Peter had been sure of himself. Too sure, it proved. He had even taken a sword when Jesus was ar-

rested, thus showing most surely that he had not even grasped the elements of the new teaching. . . . As if violence could bring the Kingdom!

Paul listened, and the weaknesses of the first followers of Jesus were clear to him. But his captivity had humbled him, so when Luke said he meant to tell the stories and write down the things Jesus had said, and leave men to judge for themselves, Paul agreed that might be the best way. He did not suggest that Luke should write down a comment on folly, or even describe the new doctrines.

"Jesus either meant what he said, or he did not," Luke said. "If he did not mean it, he is no guide for honest men. But if he is a God, he must have meant it, for a God cannot lie. It is for us to prove if his teaching is true. We can only do that by our lives. . . . I think we have got hold of something that will take men some time to explain."

When Luke and Paul talked of the intense value which Jesus had put on the individual soul, Luke told Paul honestly that he did not believe that salvation depended on any creed.

"You can't define everything, no matter how much you try, Paul. We must have a gospel of action for ignorant men and women, these poverty-stricken dregs of the nations here in Rome. Jesus would have given them courage. If you want to change the world begin with yourselves, he said. Learn to be merciful. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and others will give to you. Do not judge and you will not be judged. Love and never despair. His teaching was a breath of clean air blowing

through a stinking sick room. It had fragrance like the scent of a flower. When he spoke I felt that all men were great or could be great. If only we could look at things as he did! 'Why do you call me Master,' he once asked, 'when you fail to do what I tell you?' I want to do it here, Paul."

So Luke and Paul did try to lighten the life of the slaves. But, after the butchery of the four hundred, watching the life of the Romans, and kept in touch by Luke with their evil deeds, Paul began to feel that there would soon be an end. What could bring health to the world but the rule of God Himself? Men were too feeble and too wicked. The rulers, too rich, were too wicked, and the poor, too poor, were too feeble. There must be an end. Luke agreed with this, too. He felt Jesus would not leave the world without help.

Paul preached this hope to the slaves. He told them that one day God would place all things under the feet of Christ, and that where the spirit of Christ was there was freedom. "If God is on our side," he asked his hearers, "who can be against us? We do not wage an earthly war, but weapons not earthly are strong enough to pull down strongholds. God is your judge. He will not fail you. You are not your own masters. You were bought with a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies. Do not let yourselves be enslaved by vice. Were you a slave when you were called? Do not let that trouble you. No! Even if you gain your freedom, still do your best. For a slave called to our Master's service is the Master's freedman, just as a free man is called Christ's slave. You were all bought, and the price was paid. Do not let yourselves become

slaves to the evil customs of men. And wait till the Lord comes. He will throw light on all that is dark and obscure. He will reveal men's motives. But everything that is sensual in you must be destroyed, so that your spirits may be saved at the day of the Lord, when the last enemy to be destroyed will be death."

All this Paul preached, and the result was that the Roman community began to have a special character of its own. The slaves and poor men concentrated their hopes on the end of all things, and held themselves aloof from the world. Julius, who was still in Rome, told Paul frankly that he was puzzled.

"If you preach order, you can preach anything else you like in Rome. But you seem to tell them that there is going to be a burst up," he said.

Then he told Paul that as he was not able to get enough exercise he was getting morbid, and Paul answered:

"I talk to them in symbols. They can only find freedom through their imagination."

"But ignorant men don't understand symbols, and they are saying the world is going up in fire," Julius objected.

"I have said to them over and over," Paul defended himself, "let everyone obey the authorities. I have told them that no authority exists except by the power of God, and that a good action has nothing to fear from rulers."

"Oh, hasn't it?" Julius exclaimed. "In any case, it is dangerous to preach so much fire and glory. If once the authorities get hold of you your case will be hopeless. However, your death will be swift. They won't crucify you. They will behead you."

Paul saw as clearly as Julius that in many cases his adherents were taking symbols for realities. He tried to tone down their wild statements, and to deal with them as he had done with the speakers of tongues at Corinth. But it was true what Julius had said of his life. The constant restraint was difficult to bear. During those two years of discomfort Paul learnt how a narrow life can press down on the neck like a slave-holder. He had daily to meet men with mean minds, and to listen to talk that appeared to him silly and superstitious. He told himself, as he told the slaves, that his bondage was only in the imagination, and that everyone who belonged to Christ was free. But he knew that if it had not been for Luke he should have died. Sometimes at night he would open his door to listen to the noises of the city : to hear the soft music of a lyre plucked with a quill, or the liquid notes of a flute. Voices would be singing the jingles of Spain or the songs of Syria. Rome took her music as she took her slaves, from the whole world. Paul, as he listened, would see a sentinel's profile outlined against the sky like an image, and suddenly he would be back in Roman Asia, traveling by night and sleeping in inns outside towns guarded by Romans. Home-sickness would swamp even his hopefulness, and the next day he would talk to Luke of what they would do when he was set free. For they would be set free. He knew he was to be freed. He wrote to his friends :

"There are now no further openings for me in these places. I am longing to come to you. I may be going to Spain, but my hope is to visit you on my journey."

And then suddenly one day he was set free.

XXII

ONE morning in early spring a message came to Paul to say that the prosecutors had arrived from Judea, and that his case was to come before the Emperor at once. Nero heard these appeals from the provinces himself in the Imperial Palace, assisted by twenty assessors, who sat with him to give advice on any question of law. Paul was brought by Julius, who had been put in charge of his guards, to the Hall of Justice, and there, with some other prisoners and Luke to keep him company, he waited for his case to begin.

Nero was late, and they had plenty of time to look at the great hall, decorated with marble of every colour, and to admire the ceiling painted in blue to represent the sky, with the sun and moon and stars sprinkled over it in their places.

Paul had only seen the Emperor once. On a hot day in the summer before, Nero had passed through the precincts of his palace in his litter, carried by its black bearers and surrounded by his German Guard. Paul had caught a glimpse of his scowling, short-sighted eyes and his heavy jowl as the procession went by. Now he was to get a closer view. When at last the Emperor arrived, he came into the great hall on foot. The soldiers on guard

ranged themselves to salute, and Paul rose with his fellow-prisoners from where they had been crouching on the floor to bow as the Emperor passed. One detachment of the German guard marched before, and another behind, and in the open space between walked a medium-sized man, with grey eyes and thick hair carefully arranged. As he passed his loose robes fell back, and Paul saw that he had a large stomach and very thin legs. At the end of the hall the guard divided, and between their lines Nero ascended the steps. He paused to acknowledge the greetings of the assessors, and then, seating himself on the Justice seat, carelessly pulled his robes over his knees so that they hid his legs and swollen stomach, and showed only his scarlet boots laced up the front. Posed like that, his ugly body hidden and his fine head, well set on his heavy neck, thrown into relief against the marble panels of the wall behind him, he made a fine figure of a man.

The Emperor started the day in good humour. He was evidently accustomed to these trials, for he went through the evidence in the first cases carefully, and when he asked a question spoke with courtesy. His voice was pleasant and well-trained. He gave Paul a sense of efficiency and justice, and he felt, in spite of his new knowledge of the decay of the Roman character, that when his turn came he could rely on the old traditional justice of Rome.

Some of the prisoners were released, and some sent to punishment. But their cases took a long time, and it was late, and in the high hall the light was failing, when Paul's case was reached. It was the last in the list, and Nero was evidently tired. Luke was nervous. He had al-

ways been more afraid than Paul of the result of the appeal. The gossip that he had heard in his rambles round Rome of the murder of Octavia and the Judaistic leanings of her successor, Poppaea, first Nero's mistress and now his wife, had alarmed him. If the Jews had Poppaea on their side, things might go hard with Paul. Gossip said that in the case which the Jews had brought against Festus when he had ordered them to pull down the wall that spoilt King Agrippa's view but hid the Holy Places in the Temple in Jerusalem from desecrating Roman eyes, the influence of Poppaea had been thrown on the Jewish side. In any case, King Agrippa had lost his view and Festus the appeal, and the wall remained. The Emperor, after all, and a self-indulgent murderer. If he wanted to please his wife and was tired, would he remember justice?

The charges brought against Paul were three, and they were read aloud when his case came on. A copy of the paper detailing them was given to Nero, who, as they were read aloud, using his emerald eye-glass, ran his eye down the list.

I. The man Paul was a leader of the sect of the Nazarenes, which was not a sect coming under the privileges of the Law of Associations.

II. He had caused riots amongst the Jews throughout the Empire.

III. He had desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem.

When the reader had finished Nero said promptly :

"We will take the least important first. What desecration is alleged?"

The witnesses against Paul were men whom he had never seen before. They were not of much consequence, and did not know their case well. They were timid, too, in presence of the Emperor.

The first one stood forth to explain.

"He is accused of having brought a Greek into the Temple . . . an uncircumcised man. With us death is the penalty," he said nervously.

Nero frowned.

"You consider the presence of Greeks desecrates your Temple? I suppose you would kill even Plato if you found him there?"

The witness looked round for inspiration.

"Greeks are allowed in the outer Courts. Many Gentiles have accepted our Law. If Plato would be circumcised . . ." He stammered, and stopped, for the assessors were all smiling and glancing significantly at one another.

"Plato has been dead four hundred years," Nero said crushingly.

"First round ours," Julius, standing on guard behind Paul, whispered in his ear. Nero's admiration for the Greeks was common knowledge in Italy.

"But the man is a Nazarene! He was sent here by Festus!" the witness, alarmed at his mistake, made matters worse, for Nero, scowling, said:

"Festus is not always right. We decided against him in his other case. In this he had no choice. The man Paul appealed to my justice, and justice he shall have. Stand down and let the prisoner have your place!" he ordered,

and Paul stepped to the front. He saluted the Emperor with the correct Roman convention, and stood waiting while Nero's grey eyes swept over his shabby clothes and his broad, sturdy figure. One of the assessors explained that, so far as he knew, the Nazarenes followed a man whom they said was crucified and died and rose again. Nero with his pouting under-lip thrust out, turned his attention to Paul again.

"What have you to say for yourself?" he asked.

Paul took a step nearer. He suddenly had an uncanny feeling that he saw into the mind of the Emperor, and knew how to deal with him. He said nothing about Christ. That could wait. He looked Nero straight in the eye and said:

"I appealed to the Emperor because I knew I should find justice in Rome. I am a Jew. I was born into our strictest sect, a Pharisee. Even if I am also a Nazarene, as a born Jew I claim to come under the Law of associations. I did bring an educated Ephesian into the Temple, but only into the outer Courts. The last witness has told the Court that that is permitted."

Nero nodded. Then he looked at the assessors and said:

"Why should not the Nazarenes be allowed liberty equal to that of those other Jewish sects, the Pharisees and Saduccess? We know them all."

The assessors consulted a moment. There was no legal objection to offer, and the Emperor declared:

"I accept the appellant's testimony. Clause three is dismissed."

There was a buzz of talk for a moment, and then the

Emperor took up his paper again and asked for witnesses on clause one. This was soon settled. No Jewish authority had repudiated the Nazarenes officially. The witnesses acknowledged that Paul was a Jew, and as a Jew he belonged to a recognized creed, and had the right to claim the protection of the State even against the other sects of the same association. Nero dismissed that clause too. There remained the last clause, which charged Paul with causing riots amongst Jews throughout the Empire. Here the witnesses, all of whom came from Jerusalem, broke down hopelessly. They had seen nothing of the alleged riots in the provinces, and spoke from hearsay only. What they had heard they had half forgotten, and it was quite evident to everybody that their testimony was valueless.

Then Julius was called. He gave evidence of Paul's peacefulness on the journey and his helpfulness in the shipwreck. He said, too, that Paul had neglected all chances of escape, and at this Nero said:

"He had appealed to our justice. Why should he want to escape?"

"Last round ours, too, I think," Julius whispered when he was back in his place, and it seemed he was right. It was now late in the day. Nero was bored, and his fatigue had grown. He turned to the assessors.

"How could one insignificant man make a riot?" he asked.

Paul saw his profile, with the deep eyes and prominent nose, as he spoke over his shoulder. One of the assessors stood up to answer.

"He is alleged to have followers, and though he may

not be the cause of these constant riots amongst Jews, for they are a quarrelsome people, we must consider his influence on the Empire. He preaches a strange new powerful unseen God, who will one day place all things under the feet of this Christ whom they say was born a man, but is in truth the Son of their God."

"All Jews believe that sort of thing," Nero said coldly.

"We understand the Jewish religion, queer though we may think it, but this creed is new!" The assessor stood his ground. His attitude was independent.

"I have yet to learn that Judaism is queerer than any other religion!" Nero said, and Luke drew a long breath. Poppaea was supposed to be a Jewess. Paul had again that feeling of knowing what Nero was thinking. The assessor was a bore trying to force his hand and limit his jurisdiction by bringing forward long arguments at the end of a dutiful, tiring day. The prisoner did not look like a rioter, and his guard had given him a good character.

"He has been preaching that the world will go up in flames," the assessor persisted.

Nero yawned suddenly, and the assessor, taken aback, added warningly:

"The man is a firebrand. His ideas are dangerous."

Nero turned on him astonishingly quickly.

"That is a Latin thought. No Greek would allow that ideas are dangerous." Then he suddenly bent his lowering gaze on Paul.

"What *do* you preach?" he asked, and Paul jumped.

But he hastily collected his thoughts. If he could only interest the Emperor! . . . He stepped forward at once, and began to tell how the Christ had died to make God's forgiveness of sins legal, and of how he had ordered men to love one another. How could the Christians be dangerous? They had no wish or power to interfere with the State. Their reward was to come after death.

Nero's heavy chin sunk more deeply into his neck. "Christians?" he interrupted. "I suppose you mean Nazarenes? So you want no reward in life?"

"Why should we, when a new age is drawing near?" Paul answered, and at that Nero yawned again and rose from his seat, still yawning.

"The man is crazy, but he has done nothing illegal. Set him free," he commanded, and dismissed the Court.

The decision was at once put into writing, and Paul was free.

XXIII

PAUL'S freedom did not last long.

He arranged to go to Spain. But before he went so far he wanted to see again his friends in Roman Asia, and visit the churches he had founded there and in Greece. He left Rome at once and travelled to Brundisium. From that port he sailed to Nicopolis and went on to Corinth. Then he crossed to Roman Asia to reach Ephesus and Miletus and from Asia he turned back to Nicopolis to prepare for his voyage to Spain.

There he heard bad news. Festus had died, and in the interval before his successor could come from Rome the High Priest had seized and stoned James. Peter had not been caught. It looked to Paul, shocked and hurt by the news, as if James in the last four years must have made a considerable breach with Judaism. If not, why had he been killed? Perhaps he had learnt, as Paul himself had done, that if he lived by the rules given by Jesus it was impossible to draw lines and exclude? He must have realised that orthodox Judaism excluded all but the orthodox, and as James had always acted on his convictions he had died for his knowledge.

During Paul's two imprisonments . . . two years in Cæsarea and two in Rome . . . he had had plenty of

time to think over the past, and softened by Luke's friendship, and by their many talks of the teaching of Jesus, he had come to feel more kindly about the Jerusalem Christians. He saw now that there had been some warrant for Peter's opposition to him. Paul too had been in the wrong. If he had accepted their rule of life, if he had shown more sympathy with their views of the Kingdom, the Jerusalem Christians might, on their part, have accepted his doctrine. Life had moulded Paul. His humiliation at Athens, he felt, had begun what old age was completing. He had been too hard and positive. That was why he had not realised sooner that others knew of the spiritual life as well as he! That old Greek had known. He ought to have learnt from the old man, Paul now thought, but the Greek had expressed his knowledge in an unfamiliar way and he had been too dense to understand . . . as he had been too dense in Jerusalem. That was why he had quarrelled with Peter.

Paul had not seen Peter on that last visit to Jerusalem, when to please James he had conformed to the Jewish ritual and got himself into the mess which had landed him in Rome. Ever since their difference at Antioch, Paul had always travelled by roads by which he thought Peter would not go. He had chosen to teach in towns where Peter was unknown. What necessity had there been so to avoid one another? None! They had both been obstinate and mistaken.

Paul's horror at the death of James was soon dwarfed by a greater horror. Soon after his arrival at Nicopolis, where there were many converts amongst the Greek

colony, the news came of the fire in Rome. A house had caught fire. An east wind had been blowing, which, like a bellows, had fanned the blaze to fury. The people had crowded out of their wretched homes into streets swept by flames, while before them soldiers tore down houses and whole districts to stop the fire from spreading. But even had they been able to empty Tiber himself on the blaze, the messenger said, it would have been useless. The city burnt with a fury that nothing could stop. It was like a visitation from the gods. And now Rome was a ruin. It was a city of blackness, with smouldering beams and the charred flesh of dead bodies everywhere. And the Christians were blamed for it!

“But why? why?” Paul asked, horrified.

The answer was that the flames had leapt so high and the red glow in the sky had blazed so far that the terrified people had been sure that the end of the world had begun. For years the Christians had been talking of last days and worlds going up in flames. They had preached that the coming of the new age would be heralded by calamity. So they and their God must have made this fire. Jehovah had yielded to the prayers of slaves and poor men! Utter destruction had only been averted by the piety of those Romans who had thronged the temples clamouring for help from Roman gods. And now, the messenger told Paul, when the fire had died down and the danger seemed over, it was clear that Rome was determined to get rid of such dangerous neighbours. If seemingly powerless,

poverty-stricken men and women, slave or free, could command these calamities from the celestial powers, it was time such people were done away with.

Nero had flung himself, with what must be gathering madness, into the work of extermination. The Christians were being killed and burnt alive and thrown to the beasts in the arena. Nero had even turned them into torches. He had tied them to stakes in his gardens wrapped in tarred clothes, and lit them up. He himself had driven furiously in a chariot behind bucking terrified horses between rows of flaring bodies. Where was Roman justice now?

Paul and Luke listened in agony. They both remembered the warning of the assessor at Paul's trial, that Christians were firebrands. Nero had not foreseen and his underling had! His vanity would bleed.

When Paul had heard all the messenger had to tell he made a decision at once. He would go back to Rome. He could not leave his humble friends to bear their terror alone. He must bear it too. If he could not help he could suffer with them. To some extent it was his fault. For had he preached more clearly, had he not told them mystical truths which they had interpreted literally, this vengeance might not have been taken. He had meant that the sacrifice of Jesus had brought a new age, but he had told his followers that, just as Jesus had come suddenly into their lives, so at any moment he might come again with the sound of a trumpet to judge and end this present dispensation. He had preached that in the fire of God's presence all earthly interests shrivelled

and vanished. He had told the Emperor himself that the end of all things was at hand. And now Nero was killing these ignorant innocents.

"I will go with you," Luke said. His spirit too was torn within himself. The horror of the news had smashed all self from them both.

So they went back to Rome.

Paul was not arrested at once. He did not seek secrecy, but there was no good throwing his life away when he might bring help and comfort to his overwrought friends. He took a grange on a neglected farm outside the city, and here he and Luke lodged and made a refuge for persecuted men and women who came to learn how to gain courage to stand up to die. From rumours which they heard, and from a hint given by Julius, who still remained their friend, Paul knew that his time would be short. But one day, alone and waiting, he had a surprise.

He was sitting outside the farm buildings on the grass of the hillside when he saw an old man climb the hill. He was obviously half blind, for he peered cautiously about him. As he drew near, Paul saw that his clothes were worn and dust-stained. He seemed near the end of his strength, and Paul went forward to meet him. Then he paused astonished.

"Why! Peter! What are you doing here?" he cried.

Peter looked up and smiled.

"I have come to die with you," he said, and Paul, too amazed to say any more, drew him forward to the grass on the hillside.

Peter sat down on the ground and peered round him with his short-sighted eyes.

"You seem to have a nice place here," he said, and Paul, still staggered, sat down beside him.

"Are you not afraid, Peter?" he asked.

Peter turned to look at him.

"I was always a coward," he said.

"Then why did you come?" Paul exclaimed.

"I denied him once, so I had to come," Peter replied.

Paul could not speak. Sitting there looking at Peter's ill-kept and poor clothing, he felt a remorse so keen that something inside him seemed to bleed. Why had he ever hated Peter? He put a hand on Peter's. What a rough skin he had, and how worn and black his nails were with hard work. Paul forgot that his own clothes were as worn and his own nails as dirty. The tears rose to his eyes.

"Forgive me, Peter," he begged.

"For what? You had a just opinion of me, Paul," Peter answered.

"No! No! What did I know? I tripped over my own intellect. I was too proud . . . and now . . . to see you like this!"

Paul's tears were pouring down his cheeks.

"Don't pity me, Paul. Love me," Peter said and smiled. He had only a few teeth left. But indeed Paul had not many himself.

"We have both been fools, Paul. What with your pride and my cowardice . . . it's a wonder the Church ever grew."

"Why did I quarrel with you?" Paul asked. He mopped his eyes with the edge of his worn cloak.

"It was my fault too," Peter replied. "I thought you were leading the world astray. I thought you would break the Kingdom in pieces. I got afraid. I never had faith, and I couldn't explain. Stupid people never can. Why, if a thunderbolt struck that barn, Paul, I could only tell you it happened! You would know all about it and be able to tell how it came. But then you're a genius!"

"Can genius lead the world astray?" Paul asked.

"I don't know," Peter replied. "Some build up. Others destroy. Jesus built up. You destroyed."

"What do you mean, Peter? Destroyed!" Paul was aghast.

Peter smiled. There was a sort of a charm about his smile.

"Only the pagan gods . . . to make room," he said. "That was your job. Isn't it big enough for one man? I was wrong about that too. I see now that you must have definitions to keep ideas together!"

"And your Kingdom?" Paul asked. Peter was not so stupid after all. . . .

"Not mine! God's," Peter replied. "The Kingdom is different. You see, Jesus brought new life . . . like the spring. We may both have been bad guardians of that, Paul, but it doesn't depend on us! It's as real as the force that pushes up the corn in the earth and makes the trees bud. Now that it has come into the world no failure of ours can kill it."

Peter said no more.

A water wagtail lit near them and walked up and down. Peter turned to watch it with interest. Paul saw that he loved to watch birds as James, dead now, had loved to watch the hills of Jerusalem. All Paul's old enmity had gone. Peter had become unaccountably dear to him. He liked him to like the wagtail. Curious how the men who had known Jesus well, all took a pleasure in, no, not childish, but little things! The wagtail had caught a brown moth and held it pinched in its beak. The moth's fluttering wings fanned the air. Once it escaped and flew away high above them, but the bird was quicker and darting into the air pounced on it. Time after time the moth fluttered off. Time after time the bird unerringly leapt and struck it down again, catching it in its beak. The flutters grew weaker, the moth could only escape an inch or two away on the ground now. Finally it lay quiet, and then the bird took it firmly in its beak and flew away with it.

Peter suddenly turned to Paul.

"It's dead now . . . as we may be to-morrow! Oh, Paul, I'm afraid . . . I'm afraid."

Paul put his hand on Peter's again.

"Why are you afraid?" he asked.

Peter was shaking all over.

"I can't explain!" he answered.

Paul's hand tightened on his.

"Try!" he said.

Peter shook his head. Paul took his hand away. Best leave him to himself. He looked at Peter affectionately.

Then he sat back to wait. Thought was always slow with Peter.

"I can't say it, Paul. It makes me sick to think of it. Isn't it odd how we are born and live our lives and refuse to look at death, and then suddenly we see it has come . . . it is going to happen to you and me as it has happened to millions before us. James is dead. Mary of Magdala has gone to Spain with Martha and Lazarus. They may all be dead too. It's our turn now!"

The wagtail was back at their feet again. It had a black-and-white breast and a grey back. Peter watched it as it walked to and fro lightly and surely, perking up its tail and carefully putting one foot before the other. It was looking for another moth. Paul watched it too. It found its moth and began to stalk it as it had done the other.

"It's like fate!" Paul said.

Peter shook his head.

"The bird kills for life . . . for it's children." He paused and then went on quickly: "How can I help being afraid, Paul? I know something great is unrolling in the world. But I'm too blind to see what. I know they killed Jesus and that they can never forget him. I remember he was ready to suffer everything for everybody, but when I have to suffer, something inside my head seems to say, 'What if death is the end? What good will it all be then?'"

Peter's lips trembled. He put up a hand to hide them, but above his dirty fingers Paul saw the agony in his red-rimmed eyes.

"Why should I be given eternal life?" Peter pulled himself together. "I'm not important enough and I'm a coward. When they sentenced Jesus they asked, 'For life or for death?' and I ran away. I could not bear to have this life I know taken from me . . . to risk the agony of crucifixion and an unknown fate beyond. Ever since I have lived in fear. If I had faced death then I might have been free. I might be sure it is life."

He hid his face in his hands. And when Paul saw that familiar trick, something flared up in him. He felt he must comfort Peter.

"Listen!" he began, with his old impetuosity. "You say the Judges asked, was it for life or for death? . . . Birth and death. . . . Are they not both part of our lives? Why, when you think of the agonies of death, do you not link them with the agonies of birth? Birth is a taking away. Some force makes the soul leave the life it has and begin again in the womb and there grow until it enters this life with a cry. Death too is a taking away. A will greater than ours delivers us out of the body. What can we understand of the mystery of either? Death seems more terrible because the great midwife is inexorable and unseen, while in birth we fancy our act has created the new life and we handle it ourselves. But the same will makes both birth and death, and I think that as life begins, so it ends . . . in ecstasy!"

Peter had taken his hands from his face. His short-sighted eyes were screwed up. He was thinking hard.

"I once feared death too, Peter," Paul went on. "And it was a great fear. I tried to face it with dogma. I put

formulas between my soul and death. But now I am old I know better. I have learnt that only love gives life. When we love we have eternal life. If we reject love we cannot even see that there is such a life!"

They both sat silent for a moment, and then Peter spoke, asking himself a question.

"Was that what John meant by his words: 'Immortal life is in his teaching?' And Jesus too when he said, 'Do as I tell you and you will know if my doctrine is true.' If we face death we know."

"It is the last test," Paul answered.

Then he turned his head to listen. Surely someone was coming over the brow of the hill? He could hear measured footsteps. He looked round. Yes! It was Julius the Centurion with four of his men. The Centurion strode in front and the men followed in order, two by two, clanking, clean-shaven and smart. Neither Peter nor Paul spoke. The Romans came down the hill and stopped. Julius saluted and his men did the same.

Paul rose to his feet.

"Have you come to take us, Julius?" he asked.

Julius nodded. Then he wiped his eyes with the back of his hand and, apologising for his tears, said:

"We are all upset by the fine deaths we have seen. We are full of pity!"

"It is death then?" Paul questioned.

"It is death," Julius replied.

Paul turned to Peter and their eyes met. Paul's were full of tenderness and the fear had gone from Peter's.

"You can't run away now, Peter!" Paul said and smiled.

"Is it life or death? What lies before us?" Peter murmured.

"Only a hidden door! Rise and come through it!" Paul cried.

Then he held out a hand, and Peter, awkward as ever but holding to Paul, stumbled and scrambled up from the ground.

And the two old men went away . . . with Julius and his soldiers . . . over the brow of the hill.

4
FP

BS
2505 Paul: the Christian
Z6P27

972518

| | | |
|------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| DEC 16 '31 | <i>D Brown</i> | FAN 1 E '36 |
| JAN 28 '32 | <i>La Mar - Hamilton</i> | 1936 |
| MAY 21 '30 | <i>Mildred Nichols</i> | MAY 9 '30 |
| APR 18 '33 | <i>D S Klein</i> | 5-5-33 |
| OCT 29 '35 | | MAY 1 '35 |

972518

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



48 453 521

